In the Sultan's Salon

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In the Sultan's Salon

Learning, Religion, and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516)

VOLUME 1

By

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Für Katrin, für immer

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Acknowledgments

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Tables, Maps, and Figures

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Note on Transliteration, Style, and Periodization

Throughout this book, Arabic is transliterated according to the system of Brill's *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* and Ottoman Turkish according to that of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Names of persons appearing in Arabic sources are treated as Arabic, regardless of their linguistic origin. Exceptions are made for the names of prominent figures which are transliterated in the way they appear most frequently in secondary literature. Thus, the names of the Ottoman sultans whose reigns were contemporaneous to that of al-Ghawrī are given as Selīm and Bāyezīd, not Salīm and Abū Yazīd. Toponyms are used in their established English form wherever possible. Terms such as "Syria" or "Egypt" denote historical regions and not the territories of present-day nation-states unless indicated otherwise. Following Donald S. Richards, the adjective "Mamluk" is used to refer to the "totality of the state, society and culture etc." which dominated Egypt and Syria in the late middle period, whereas "*mamlūk*" denotes "an individual who has that legal and social status," that is, someone who was at one point in his life a (military) slave.[1]

The design of the footnotes and the bibliography follows the guidelines of Brill's *Islamic History and Civilization* series. Unpublished PhD dissertations and master theses are treated as monographs. All quotations from manuscripts reproduce their orthographic and linguistic peculiarities faithfully. Page numbers are given for manuscripts that feature pagination but no foliation. If manuscripts include both pagination and foliation, the reference system more consistently used in them is employed. In case of manuscripts that have neither pagination nor foliation, folio numbers are given. English renditions of Quranic passages quote the translation of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem unless otherwise specified. All other translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Dates are given in the form AH/CE unless otherwise indicated. Two systems of periodization of Islamicate Middle Eastern history are used. Terms based on dynasties and comparable social bodies such as "the Umayyad period" or "the Mamluk period" are employed especially in contexts of political history.[2] The Mamluk period is subdivided into an early period ending in the last decades of the eighth/fourteenth century and a late period. In addition, the present study builds on Marshall Hodgson's work in using the categories "early Islamicate"

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1   Richards, Amirs 40 (both quotations).

2   On the usefulness and limitations of such terms, see, e.g., Bauer, Search 144–5; Bauer, *Mittelalter* 85; Donner, Tool 30–4.

(ca. first/seventh to mid-fifth/eleventh century), "middle Islamicate" (ca. mid-fifth/eleventh to the second quarter of the tenth/sixteenth century), and "modern Islamicate" (ca. second quarter of the tenth/sixteenth century onward). The middle and the modern period are subdivided into earlier and later periods with the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century and the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century representing the times of transition, respectively.

Abbreviations

AI	*Annales Islamologiques*
AKM	Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
AS	Arabische Studien
ASK	Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg
ASP	*Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*
ATS	Arabistische Texte und Studien
BI	Bibliotheca Islamica
BIAL	Brill's Inner Asian Library
BoIS	Bonner Islamstudien
BRISMES	*British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
BSMEL	Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures
BTS	Beiruter Texte und Studien
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CAI	Cahier des Annales Islamologiques
CAJ	*Central Asiatic Journal*
CHAL	Cambridge History of Arabic Literature
CCME	Culture and Civilization in the Middle East
CSIC	Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization
CSME	Chicago Studies on the Middle East
CT	Collection Turcica
DA	Diskurse der Arabistik
EAL	Meisami, J.S. and P. Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2 vols., London 1998.
EI²	Gibb, H.A.R. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, Leiden 1960–2006.
EI³	Fleet, K. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Islam, Three: Online Version*. Leiden 2007–.
EIr	Yarshater, E. et al. (eds.) *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, London 1982–.
EQ	McAuliffe, J.D. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols., Leiden 2001–6.
ER	M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols., New York 1987.
FIS	Freiburger Islamstudien
IHC	Islamic History and Civilization
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
ILS	*Islamic Law and Society*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
IPTS	Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science
IrS	*Iranian Studies*

IS	Iran Studies
ITS	Istanbuler Texte und Studien
IU	Islamkundliche Untersuchungen
JAL	*Journal of Arabic Literature*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JAS	*Journal of Abbasid Studies*
JA	*Journal asiatique*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JIS	*Journal of Islamic Studies*
JNS	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JOS	*The Journal of Ottoman Studies*
JQS	*Journal of Qur'anic Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
LiK	Literaturen im Kontext
LMEH	Library of Middle East History
MaS	Mamluk Studies
MEL	*Middle Eastern Literatures*
MH	Macht und Herrschaft
MIC	Meri, J.W. (ed), *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 13,2), London 2006.
MIDEO	*Mélanges Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire*
MISK	Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt
MMED	The Medieval Mediterranean
MSR	*Mamlūk Studies Review*
MW	*The Muslim World*
NHIS	New Horizons in Islamic Studies
NHL	Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft
NS	Norm und Struktur
OEH	The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OSIA	Oxford Studies in Islamic Art
PSNE	Princeton Studies on the Near East
RÉI	*Revue des études islamiques*
REMMM	*Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*
RO	*Rocznik Orientalistyczny*
RSMEH	Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern History
RSMEL	Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures
SALL	Studies in Arabic Language and Literature

SGHI	Studies of the German Historical Institute
SI	*Studia Islamica*
SICH	Studies in Islamic Culture and History
SILS	Studies in Islamic Law and Society
SPCH	Studies in Persian Cultural History
TIH	Themes in Islamic History
TSQ	Texts and Studies on the Qurʾān
UHML	Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture
WI	*Die Welt des Islams*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZhF	*Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*
ZGAIW	*Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften*

Introduction

1.1 Topics and Research Questions

In curia sum, et de curia loquor, et nescio, Deus scit, quid sit curia.

I live in the court and speak about the court but do not know—as God knows—what the court is.[1]

The writer of this sentence, the Welsh nobleman, author, and cleric Walter Map (ca. 1130–1209 or 1210 CE) spent about twenty years of his life at the court of the English King Henry II (r. 1154–1189 CE). Belonging to Henry's inner circle and serving as one of his trusted diplomats, Walter Map had firsthand knowledge not only of the English court, but also of those of the king of France, the Pope, and other European lords. His manifold experiences with the world of courtly life found expression in his often satirical *De nugis curialium* (On the trifles of courtiers), from which the above sentence is quoted.[2]

Although Walter Map's statement about his own ignorance should be taken with a grain of salt given the overall character of his work, it points to a question faced by many scholars of premodern societies:[3] What is a "court," and how can it be conceptualized? Whereas historians working on Europe and other regions of the world have repeatedly addressed this terminological and theoretical issue over the past decades, scholars working on Islamicate societies have hitherto only rarely reflected on it. While passing references to "courts," "courtiers," and "courtly culture" are legion in works on the premodern Islamicate world, the meanings of these terms are hardly ever explained, let alone precisely conceptualized.[4]

One reason for this situation lies in the relatively limited number of studies that focus primarily on Islamicate courts, especially in the premodern Arabic-

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1 Map, *De Nugis* 2. I owe this quotation to Melville, Spiele 180.
2 Brooke, Introduction, in Map, *De Nugis* xiii–xix; Seibt, Plan 1–2. The translation of the title of Map's work follows Cartlidge, Masters 3. On the work, see Brooke, Introduction, in Map, *De Nugis* xix–l; Hinton, Composition; Seibt, Plan.
3 "Premodern" is used in this study as a general term denoting historical periods predating modernity, as is argued for in, e.g., Bauer, Search 141.
4 El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 1–4. See also van Berkel et al., Introduction 2. See, however, note 8 below in this chapter for exceptions.

speaking world.[5] Those works that do study premodern Islamicate courts typically address a few select cases from the so-called "Golden Age"[6] of Islam, most notably the courts of ʿAbbasid and Buyid Iraq and Iran, Fatimid Egypt, and Muslim-ruled Iberia.[7] Nevertheless, even these studies often lack an explicit terminological and theoretical framework in their analysis of courts.[8]

Our knowledge of the courts of the Mamluk sultans (648–923/1250–1517) and their culture is even more limited, despite the importance of these rulers for Islamicate history, the growing scholarly interest in their sultanate, and the fact that scholars using approaches from historical anthropology, which recently attracted considerable attention in Mamluk studies, often examine courts in other cultural contexts.[9] Until now, no one has produced a book-length study of Mamluk court life, and the often short available articles that address specific aspects of Mamluk court culture are typically limited in scope,

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5 El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 517; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 2; Peacock and Yıldız, Introduction 12; Flatt, *Courts* 12. For the ʿAbbasid period, see also van Berkel et al., Introduction 1–2; El Cheikh, Prince 199; El Cheikh, Space 335–6; and for the Seljuq period, see Hillenbrand, Aspects 22. But note the recent edited volumes of Fuess and Hartung (eds.), *Cultures*; Peacock and Yıldız (eds.), *Seljuks*; von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle (eds.), *Brokers*; Pomerantz and Vitz (eds.), *Presence*; Çıpa and Fetvacı (eds.), *Writing*; Orthmann and Kollatz (eds.), *Ceremonial*; Canby et al. (eds.), *Court*. On the somewhat different situation of the Persianate world, see, e.g., the overview in Binbaş, *Networks* 3–6; Flatt, *Courts* 10–2.

6 On the problematic character and context of this term, see, e.g., Brentjes, Prison 132–3; Bauer, Search 144; Bauer, *Mittelalter* 106–8, 140–1; Cooperson, Age, esp. 42–3, 46–52, 57–9.

7 E.g., on ʿAbbasid and Buyid courts, see Ahsan, *Life*; Algazi, Hofkulturen; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 134–48; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers; El Cheikh, Conversation; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation; El Cheikh, Prince; El Cheikh, Space; England, *Empires* 24–66; Gökpınar, *Musikkultur*; Gordon, Courtesans; Kennedy, *Court*; Marmer, *Culture*; Nielson, Visibility; Osti, Remuneration; Robinson (ed.), *City*; Pomerantz, Error; Rowson, Irregularity; Sanders, Marāsim; Sharlet, Women; Sourdel, Robes; Sourdel, Cérémonial; van Berkel et al., *Crisis*; Naaman, *Literature*; on Fatimid courts, see Canard, Cérémonial; Cohen and Somekh, Interreligious Majālis; Oesterle, Namensnennung; Oesterle, Missionaries; Oesterle, *Kalifat*; Sanders, Language; Sanders, Marāsim; Sanders, Mawākib; Sanders, *Ritual*; Sanders, Robes; Walker, Elites; on Iberian courts, see Anderson, *Villa*; Barceló, Caliph; Bobrycki, Breaking; Chalmeta, Marāsim; Chalmeta, Mawākib; Reynolds, al-Andalus; Robinson, Paradise; Robinson, Memory.

8 El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80. Notable exceptions include, e.g., Vitz and Pomerantz, Introduction 3–6; and the work of Naaman, El Cheikh, Oesterle, and Sanders as listed in previous footnotes. Naaman's monograph represents the most recent attempt to study Arabic courtly literary life, but fails to engage with theoretical work on courts from neighboring disciplines and thus falls behind the state of research.

9 On historical anthropology in Mamluk studies, see, e.g., Conermann, Mamlukology, esp. 7–8, 15–20; von Hees, Mamlukology. On courts as a subject of historical anthropology, see El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 517.

thus underlining the need for further studies.[10] Ulrich Haarmann's 1989 characterization of Mamluk court culture as a "neglected subject"[11] remains true.

The reasons for this situation lie not in a dearth of sources, but rather, primarily, in the narrative of a cultural, social, and economic decline of the Islamicate world during the late middle period, a narrative that has dominated its study for decades, if not centuries. More recent scholarship has thoroughly deconstructed and refuted this earlier paradigm of decline, although remnants of this paradigm still haunt both academic and non-academic discourses.[12] However, even otherwise highly valuable current scholarship critical of the decline narrative upholds one of its central building blocks, namely the notion that the courts of the late middle period ceased to play a central role in the cultural, intellectual, or literary life of their time.[13] It seems that this idea of an assumed "irrelevance"[14] of courts reflects, as least in part, the biases and vested interests of Arabic-speaking authors critical of contemporaneous, often non-Arab political elites. As Haarmann noted: "[T]he rich and variegated religious and literary culture at the Mamluk court [...], was simply ignored by local Arab chroniclers. [...] [They] seem to have followed the strategy of passing over in silence what in their view was not to be."[15]

Present-day scholars who maintain the notion of an assumed cultural insignificance of courts of the middle period do so in a context that lacks specialized studies on these elite formations. They thereby risk not only reproducing the biases of Mamluk historiographical literature, but also steering scholarly attention further from the understudied topic of court culture, thus rendering specialists in the Islamicate world unable to contribute to current interdisciplinary debates about court life as a central aspect of the functioning of pre-

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10   E.g., Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend; Bresc, Entrées; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme; Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel; D'hulster, Sitting; Flemming, Activities; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen; Flemming, Perser; Flinterman and van Steenbergen, Formation; Fuess, Sultans; Fuess, Between; Guo, *Sports*; Guo, Cross-Gender; Levanoni, Food; Yungman, Taste; Petry, Robing; Sadeque, Court; Stowasser, Manners; Vermeulen, Aspects; Vermeulen, Tenue; Vermeulen, Note.

11   Haarmann, Arabic 89. For a similar statement, see Lapidus, *Cities* 44.

12   See section 7.2 below.

13   See, e.g., Bauer, Communication 23; Bauer, Shāʿir 719–20; Herzog, Culture 145; Muhanna, *World* 72; al-Musawi, *Republic* 81, 127, 248, 263 (for literary life); Muhanna, *World* 20; Muhanna, Century 352 (for literary and intellectual life).

14   Talib, *Epigram* 89.

15   Haarmann, Injustice 76. See also Mauder, *Krieger* 32–8, 174–6; Keegan, Review 252; Berkey, Mamluks 163; Berkey, Culture and Society 391–2; Haarmann, Arabic 81–4; Haarmann, Ideology 176, 182–3, 188; Rabbat, Representing, esp. 16.

and early modern societies on a global scale. Moreover, the assumption that Islamicate courts of the late middle period no longer offered relevant cultural stimuli can serve, like many other surviving fragments of the decline narrative, to justify politically-charged discourses about cultural, social, intellectual, and religious hierarchies among contemporary societies, and may even be adduced as a reason for an alleged "cultural backwardness" of the Islamicate world today.

The monograph at hand seeks to remedy this gap in research by presenting the first comprehensive and detailed study of multiple core aspects of Mamluk court life. To this end, it develops as a necessary precondition a reasoned theoretical conceptualization of the term "court" that is applicable to premodern Islamicate societies, and thus opens the way for future comparative and interdisciplinary studies.[16] Applying this conceptualization to the reign of the penultimate Mamluk sultan, Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 906–22/1501–16), the study argues that late Mamluk court culture reached a level of richness and sophistication irreconcilable with the generalized notion that courts of the late middle period no longer functioned as prime centers of cultural production. In contrast to earlier studies that viewed al-Ghawrī's tenure as a time when "the decline of the cultural level [...] was manifest,"[17] the following chapters demonstrate that in a period of economic transformations, political instability, and external threats which not only put the legitimacy and security of al-Ghawrī's rule, but indeed the very survival of the Mamluk Sultanate at stake, the Mamluk court functioned as an innovative and transregional center of intellectual, religious, and political culture. The local Egyptians and migrants from across the Islamicate world who shaped its courtly culture relied on the century-old Islamicate literary, scholarly, religious, and political heritage and on new and innovative approaches to tackle the challenges that the Mamluk Sultanate faced during the early decades of the tenth/sixteenth century. To this end, they turned the Cairo Citadel into a cosmopolitan venue of intellectual debate where learned men from across the Islamicate ecumene sought answers to highly contested scholarly questions. Moreover, they enacted a rich religious life marked by novel theological formulas and practices that could support the view that al-Ghawrī was a God-sent centennial renewer (*mujaddid*). Furthermore, the members of the court staged a program of splendid events and

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16   Cf. on this desideratum, El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 536; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 3–4. On the importance of comparative court studies, see esp. Bihrer, Curia 268–9; Duindam, *Vienna* 302; and for a promising step in this direction, which unfortunately all but ignores the Mamluk case, see Duindam, Point.

17   Geoffroy, al-Suyūṭī 914. See also Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 102; Irwin, *Night* 443.

patronage activities to buttress the claim that al-Ghawrī was not only a legitimate Mamluk sultan, but indeed a divinely chosen universal ruler of noble origin and the rightful caliph of the Muslim community.

Such an in-depth analysis of court life under al-Ghawrī is possible thanks to a unique corpus of sources that have, in part, remained undiscovered until very recently and are brought here to full use for the first time. The three most important of these sources claim to be eyewitness accounts of the *majālis* or salons[18] al-Ghawrī convened at the Cairo Citadel to discuss scholarly, religious, and political issues with members of his court and foreign guests. Two of these works, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya* ([*sic*], The jewels of the sultanic salons on the truths of Quranic mysteries) and *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī* (The brilliant star on al-Ghawrī's questions) were first edited in 1941. However, an examination of the surviving manuscripts showed that the available editions leave out about half of the former text and three-quarters of the latter work without properly indicating these omissions. The present study is the first to analyze these works as completely as possible based on both the edited text and the available manuscript material. The third source on al-Ghawrī's salons, a recently identified two-volume work entitled *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya* (The jeweled necklaces on al-Ghawrī's anecdotes), remains entirely in manuscript form and has hitherto all but escaped scholarly attention. When seen together with other contemporaneous and later sources, these texts allow us to pose new questions about al-Ghawrī's court, questions that can seldom be answered for other periods of Mamluk history. In particular, the present study addresses the following points:

I.   How can we conceptualize the court in the context of late Mamluk history?

II.   In what ways was the Mamluk court involved in learned activities and the transmission of knowledge during al-Ghawrī's reign?

III.   What roles did the Mamluk court play with regard to religious thought and practice?

IV.   What concepts of rulership existed at al-Ghawrī's court and how did they inform the courtly representation and legitimation of rule in the late Mamluk period?

On the one hand, these questions reflect the focus of the main sources of the present study, which contain ample information on the scholarly, religious, and political culture of the Mamluk court. The fact that these texts provide comprehensive information on these topics underscores their importance for their

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18   On *majālis* and the translation "salons," see section 1.2.5 below.

main intended readership, that is, Sultan al-Ghawrī's contemporaries in general and the members of his court in particular. On the other hand, by posing the questions outlined here, the present study addresses several desiderata in our knowledge of premodern courts, Islamicate and non-Islamicate alike. As current overviews of the state of research emphasize, until very recently scholarship has all but neglected the role of courts as centers of the transmission of knowledge and religious life, even as it relates to better-known European courts.[19] Moreover, despite the growing interest in Islamicate political culture and the obvious importance of courts in this field,[20] scholars have only rarely focused on the role of courts in the representation and legitimation of rule. Given our present state of knowledge about Islamicate courts, it is necessary to address these kinds of questions through case studies of individual courts based on primary sources written by members of these courts.[21]

The separation between learning, religious life, and political culture expressed in the questions listed above is purely heuristic. Many learned activities at the Mamluk court had religious elements, while most aspects of religious life were unthinkable without a certain level of scholarly knowledge. Both religious and learned life, in turn, were important for how political rule was conceptualized, performed, and expressed in a courtly context. Finally, concepts and practices of political rule strongly influenced the ways in which knowledge was transmitted and religious beliefs enacted by and among those who surrounded the ruler. Yet, it is only by studying these topics, one after the other, that their interrelations become clearly discernible; this is especially true since present-day students of Islamicate history are used to thinking in these intellectual categories.[22]

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19   E.g., Bihrer, Curia 263 (transmission of knowledge), 263–4 (religious life); von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 21 (religious life); Adamson, Making 24 (religious life). On the religious life of early modern European courts, see now Adamson, Making 24–7; Meinhardt et al. (eds.), *Religion*; Schaich (ed.), *Monarchy*. On educational and learned activities at European courts, see now, e.g., Paravicini (ed.), *Erziehung*; Schlieben, *Macht*; Föller, *Königskinder*; Grebner and Fried (eds.), *Kulturtransfer*; Füssel, Kuhle, and Stolz (eds.), *Höfe*; Füssel, Gelehrte; Fried, Netzen; Walther, Fürsten; Heinecke, Rössler, and Schock (eds.), *Residenz*; Arcelli (ed.), *Saperi*; Pollnitz, *Education*; Meyer, *Princes*; Hoffman, *Rule*; Sánchez-Molero, *Felipe*.

20   Cf. Adamson, Making 7; Larner, Courts 669; Peacock and Yıldız, Introduction 12. On desiderata in this context, see also Bihrer, Curia 264.

21   El Cheikh, Prince 200; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80, for the demand to "limit the inquiry to a particular historical moment"; and El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 535, for the importance of sources written by people attached to the respective courts.

22   For similar considerations with regard to the political and the religious, see also Lange,

The structure of the present monograph reflects its research questions. The remainder of the introductory chapter is an in-depth engagement with the question of what constitutes a court. It reviews prominent definitions and conceptualizations from neighboring disciplines, such as historical sociology and European history, to develop an understanding of "court" as an analytical category that can be fruitfully applied to Islamicate and especially Mamluk contexts. This approach reflects the conviction that insights derived from the study of other cultural spheres can be helpful in the investigation of Islamicate court culture, provided these insights reach a sufficient level of abstraction.[23] In particular, the chapter shows that while premodern Arabic did not feature a term that could be readily translated as "court," a conceptualization of "court" as a series of performative and spatially manifested occasions bearing communicative significance (such as receptions, festivities, or *majālis*) and as a social "entity" constituted by those participating in these occasions offers a particularly robust analytical framework for studying premodern Islamicate societies. The final section examines *majlis* as a key term for these performative and social dimensions of late Mamluk court culture.

The second chapter offers a concise historical narrative of Sultan al-Ghawrī's fifteen-year reign, based on Ibn Iyās' (d. after 928/1522) chronicle, hitherto, the most widely quoted source on the period. The subsequent critical review of the state of research provides readers with an introduction to the current knowledge about al-Ghawrī's reign that is, first, necessary for a proper contextualization of the findings of the present monograph; and second, will alert readers to current challenges and problems in the study of this period. Among other things, the chapter demonstrates that the heavy and often unbalanced reliance on Ibn Iyās as the main informant about late Mamluk history is highly problematic, given the chronicler's direct involvement in the events he narrates and his conflict-ridden relationship with al-Ghawrī in particular. As a consequence of this over-reliance on Ibn Iyās, many modern researchers have accepted his characterization of al-Ghawrī as a greedy and unjust tyrant without critically examining this source. Moreover, the review of the state of the field underlines the need for new approaches to the study of late Mamluk history, approaches that integrate perspectives from political, religious, economic, cultural, and intellectual history.

Chapter 3 introduces the foundations of such novel approaches by examining sources, other than Ibn Iyās, on the last decades of Mamluk rule, including

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Paradise 274; Crone, *Thought* 393–8. For a plea to study courtly educational, religious, and political activities together, see Oesterle, Missionaries 64.

23   For a related argument, see Ali, *Culture* 11.

texts in Arabic, Turkic, and European languages alongside material evidence. Representing such diverse genres as chronicles, biographical dictionaries, literary offerings, mirrors-for-princes, chancery manuals, documentary sources, religious poetry, travelogues, and inscriptions, these sources reveal their full potential when viewed together with the three accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* (*Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*) mentioned above. The chapter discusses these in part unedited accounts for the first time in detail. It demonstrates that these texts constitute specimens of the time-honored genre of Arabic courtly *majālis* works and belong to two textually independent but substantially overlapping traditions of writing about al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. This finding underlines the historical source value of these texts, which claim to constitute eyewitness accounts of the events they describe in detail, including aspects such as their participants, duration, place, and topics of discussion—and even the food that was served to the sultan and his guests.

The fourth chapter examines the intellectual life of al-Ghawrī's court and asks whether the processes of learning and the transmission of knowledge in his *majālis* and related social contexts exhibited specifically courtly features. It analyzes spatial, chronological, and performative characteristics of the *majālis* and demonstrates the diversity of their participants, which included, in addition to the sultan, local and itinerant scholars, prominent political functionaries, and such seemingly marginal figures as military recruits and a court jester with an ambiguous gender identity. The chapter thereafter examines, in detail, debates from the various fields of learning that shaped the intellectual climate of the *majālis* and explores their interconnectedness with contemporaneous scholarly currents and political challenges. After broadening the analytical scope by scrutinizing other courtly activities of learning, such as *ḥadīth* recitations and manuscript production at the Cairo Citadel, the chapter concludes that al-Ghawrī's court was deeply integrated into the broader context of late Mamluk intellectual culture with its distinctive features of professionalization, cosmopolitanism, the amalgamation of religious learning and literary activities, and an abundance of available information. Fulfilling primarily intellectual, but also political and entertainment functions, the intellectual activities of the court emphasized its role as a center of scholarly patronage and state-of-the-art learned debates that brought together participants from various social, cultural, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds.

Chapter 5 sheds light on the various performative, social, and intellectual dimensions of the religious life of the court. It demonstrates the central role of the court in religious events, such as the celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday, and its openness toward Sufi and pro-ʿAlid currents. Special

attention is paid to the ingenuity with which members of the court approached contested religious issues and developed formulas of theological compromise intended to maintain the peace among the various Sunni groups within the sultanate, groups such as Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarīs and Ḥanafī-Māturīdīs. Moreover, the chapter examines the efforts of al-Ghawrī and those around him to endow the sultan's rule with religious meaning by casting him in the role of the protector of religion and morals, the patron of religious activities, an active contributor to religious scholarship, and the God-sent centennial renewer (*mujaddid*). Many of the religious undertakings of the court served to corroborate al-Ghawrī's entitlement to these prominent statuses, which in the case of the *mujaddid* in particular, implied one of highest humanly attainable ranks in Sunni cosmology. The concluding section highlights the significance of religious communication for the social cohesion of the Mamluk court and its interactions with its local, regional, and transregional interlocutors. It shows that members of the court employed highly charged symbols alongside other methods of communication to affirm their shared religious identity and make innovative statements about the meaning of Mamluk sultanic rule.

The topic of rulership, representation, and legitimation of rule at al-Ghawrī's court stands at the center of chapter 6. Based on the work of Max Weber, the chapter argues that in the early tenth/sixteenth century, late Mamluk sultanic rule underwent a pronounced crisis of legitimacy caused by both domestic and transregional factors, including the rise of powerful rivals such as the Ottomans and the Safawids. In reaction, the sultan and members of his court engaged in mainfold and, in part, highly innovative strategies of representation and legitimation of rule. They sought to situate the former military slave al-Ghawrī in time-honored traditions of exemplary rulership and used elaborate communicative means to prove that their sultan satisfied four central requirements for legitimate rule in the Islamicate middle period, namely his noble origin (in al-Ghawrī's case either from the Prophet Jacob or from a Ghassanid ruler), his divine appointment, his justice, and his military prowess. Special attention is paid to the unparalleled efforts of members of the court to establish that al-Ghawrī not only de facto wielded the powers Sunni political theory accords to the imamate, but indeed, was also the rightful caliph of the Muslim community. Thereafter, the chapter switches the focus to the mainly performative strategies of representation and legitimation. It shows that by convening his *majālis*, commissioning, in part, distinctively novel architectural projects, issuing new varieties of copper coinage bearing images of his buildings, staging lavish court events, and sponsoring literary and artistic productions, al-Ghawrī and his court were not engaging in fruitless spending and unreasonably squan-

dering the wealth of the sultanate, as earlier scholarship suggested. Rather, these activities formed an integral part of an innovative strategy to dramatically reaffirm the legitimacy of late Mamluk rulership in general and that of al-Ghawrī in particular, vis-à-vis both local audiences and interlocutors across the Islamicate and especially Persianate ecumene. The chapter concludes that, in contrast to earlier assumptions, the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court was not irrational, or conservative, or parochial, but rather closely entangled with other Islamicate regions, often remarkably inventive, and largely driven by rational motives.

In light of the extent and complexity of the topics the present monograph covers, the final chapter begins with a detailed chapter-by-chapter summary before the second part explores the importance of these key findings for current debates about the historical development of the Islamicate world of the late middle period and the postulated cultural "irrelevance" of courts in Mamluk times. It emphasizes the importance of the concept of "court" as an analytical category for Islamicate history and reviews our conclusions about the central role of al-Ghawrī's court as an innovative, cosmopolitan, and culturally open center in the intellectual, religious, and political life of its time, both locally and transregionally. These results stand in clear contrast to the highly problematic paradigm of a general decline of the Islamicate world during the late middle period, a paradigm that has strongly influenced the present state of research on later Islamicate intellectual, religious, literary, and cultural history. The present monograph therefore agrees with numerous recent studies that call for the complete abandonment of this at least partially colonial concept. In particular, the study at hand demonstrates the urgent need to revise the notion that Mamluk courts were culturally, intellectually, religiously, and literarily "irrelevant," a notion that constitutes one of the last building blocks of the decline paradigm that have hitherto remained unchallenged. This notion, developed against the background of an almost complete lack of detailed studies of Mamluk court culture and reflecting the vested interests of the authors of biased sources, is in fact irreconcilable with the findings of the present monograph. Mamluk courts could and did serve as centers of political, intellectual, religious, and literary life, and it seems oversimplistic to explain the literary and intellectual florescence of non-courtly Mamluk milieus through an alleged absence of courts on the cultural scene. Rather, future research must analyze the complex interactions that took place between courtly and non-courtly actors in the domains of Mamluk scholarship, literature, religion, and politics. Similarly, further studies should examine whether and to what degree the findings about Mamluk court culture under al-Ghawrī also apply to other periods of Mamluk history. Furthermore, long-

term studies that relate the findings about late Mamluk court culture to those of earlier and later periods of Islamic history appear to be just as promising as synchronic transregional approaches focusing on entanglements and interconnections.

The outlined structure of the monograph caters to the needs of a readership that, while interested in Islamicate history, might not be thoroughly familiar with the details of late Mamluk history and current debates in Mamluk studies. Readers well-acquainted with the latter two topics might wish to move directly to chapter 3 after completing the present chapter. Specialists in comparative court studies are invited to carefully examine the discussion of the concept of "court" in the remainder of the present chapter and the conclusion and then explore its application from chapter 4 onward before returning to chapters 2 and 3. Experts in Islamicate intellectual, religious, or political history will find it helpful to first go through the discussion of the main sources in the first section of chapter 3, then continue their journey through the monograph with the chapters and sections closest to their areas of specialization. Readers seeking an overview of the themes addressed in this monograph before they begin an in-depth perusal are invited to start with the chapter-by-chapter summary in chapter 7.

Two further preliminary remarks are in order here. First, there is a noteworthy variety in the spelling in the secondary literature of the *ism* (personal name) and the *nisba* (relational surname) of the sultan whose court is under study here. The reason for this lies in the ambiguity of their rendering in Arabic script: قانصوه الغوري. The *wāw*s in both parts of the name can be read as denoting either long vowels or diphthongs. Moreover, it is not immediately clear whether the *nūn* of the *ism* carries a vowel, and if so, which one. Without additional information, the name could equally well be transliterated as "Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī," "Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī," "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī," "Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī," "Qānṣawh al-Ghūrī," or "Qaniṣawh al-Ghūrī," to name just the more probable possibilities, many of which appear in the secondary literature.

The present study advocates the transliteration "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī" on paleographic, linguistic, and metrical grounds. Already in 1922, E. Denison Ross referred to a copy of the Quran dedicated to the sultan in which his *ism* and his *nisba* were written with *fatḥa*s preceding the *wāw*s, thus leaving only the transliterations "Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī" and "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī" possible.[24]

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24   Ross, Review 334. See also Salmon (trans.), *Conquest* 1.

The manuscript sources used in the present study show that those who were in personal contact with the sultan, and produced literary works in his lifetime, considered the latter alternative correct. In several places, the sultan's name features in these sources with vowel marks. In two cases, a *kasra* is written below the *nūn* of his *ism*.[25] Furthermore, two manuscripts written for the sultan during his lifetime feature his *ism* with a *kasra* below the *nūn* and a *fatḥa* above the *ṣād*.[26] As for the sultan's *nisba*, numerous contemporaneous manuscripts have a *fatḥa* above the letter preceding the *wāw*.[27] The Arabic poems attributed to the sultan also corroborate this reading. Several of these texts known to us inter alia through two fully voweled manuscripts use the pen-name of "al-Ghawrī"[28] or, in one case, "Qāniṣawh."[29]

This pronunciation fits neatly with what we know about the etymological origin of the name. Ananiasz Zajączkowski and Annemarie Schimmel demonstrated (independently from each other) that "Qāniṣawh" is the Arabic rendering of the Turkic[30] *qanı ṣav* meaning "His blood is healthy."[31] The *nisba*, "al-Ghawrī" refers to the barracks (*ṭabaqa*) in which the sultan was trained as a *mamlūk* recruit; they were known as those of "al-Ghawr."[32]

The Ottoman Turkish translation of the Persian epic *Shāhnāme* made on the sultan's behalf yields further arguments for the reading "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī." Building on the fact that the entire text is composed in the meter of *hazaj*,

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25   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 1.

26   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 142ᵛ; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193, 210ʳ, 240ᵛ, 314ʳ.

27   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 6; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 2ᵛ; ii, fols. 1ᵛ, 67ᵛ, 107ʳ; al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 2ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193, 210ʳ, 240ᵛ, 314ʳ.

28   E.g., Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 68ʳ, 69ᵛ; al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 18ᵛ.

29   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fol. 75ᵛ; al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 17ʳ.

30   The present study uses the adjective "Turkic" to refer to the family of languages spoken by the Turkic peoples, both in a general sense and where the available information is not sufficient to identify a specific language. The term "Turkish" denotes the official language of the Republic of Turkey, while "Ottoman Turkish" refers to the Turkic literary language widely used in the Ottoman Sultanate.

31   Zajączkowski, Traduction 59; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 18; Zajączkowski, Poezje 73–5; Schimmel, *Names* 72, 92. See also D'hulster, Sitting 244–5.

32   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 65ʳ; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 294; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 46; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 242ʳ; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-G̲h̲awrī 552. See also Zajączkowski, Traduction 61; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 17–18. On these barracks, see Popper, *Notes* i, 22. For a different etymology of the name, one not supported by Mamluk sources, see Barker, *Merchandise* 255.

Kristof D'hulster showed that the sultan's *ism* that appears repeatedly in the text must be pronounced "Qāniṣawh," as the meter requires that the *nūn* be followed by short a vowel.[33] In addition, the fully voweled manuscript of the Ottoman Turkish *Şāhnāme* offers additional proof of the reading "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī."[34] Taken together, this evidence establishes beyond doubt that the sultan's contemporaries pronounced his name "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī."

The other parts of the sultan's name are less controversial. His contemporary ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-Malaṭī (d. 920/1514) calls him "Qāniṣawh min Baybardī, al-Ashrafī, al-Jarkasī, al-Malik al-Ashraf, Sayf al-Dīn, Abū l-Naṣr, known as al-Ghawrī."[35] The element "min Baybardī" indicates the slave trader that had brought him to Egypt as a young *mamlūk*.[36] The *nisba*s "al-Ashrafī" and "al-Jarkasī" show that al-Ghawrī belonged to the manumitted *mamlūk*s of sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96) and that he was considered to be of Circassian ethnicity.[37] By adopting the titular name "al-Malik al-Ashraf" al-Ghawrī followed the example of several previous Mamluk sultans, including his highly esteemed indirect predecessor Qāytbāy. With the latter, he also shared the *kunya* (patronymic) "Abū l-Naṣr." Finally, the *laqab* (cognomen or honor-ifc title) "Sayf al-Dīn" was very common among members of the late Mamluk military.[38]

As a second preliminary remark, it is helpful to state clearly that the present study is not a biography of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī during his time in office, nor is it an analytical narrative of the political and economic history of his reign. Labib Y. Suhbi, Maḥmūd Rizq Salīm, Carl F. Petry, and others have studied these topics in detail.[39] Moreover, the previously unused sources on which the present study builds offer only limited new insights into these themes.

Likewise, the present study does not constitute an institutional analysis of Mamluk court offices or the administrative structure of the Mamluk ruling apparatus. While it seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Mamluk sultans in general and Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī in particular ruled over their realm at large and the people around them, the present study sees the court—as discussed below—as an administrative institution consisting of a hierarchy

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33   D'hulster, Sitting 243–4.

34   D'hulster, Sitting 243–4. See also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 8; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 18.

35   Al-Malaṭī, *Nuzhat* 155.

36   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 1ᵛ. For this unusual part of Mamluk names, see Ayalon, Names 223–8.

37   Ayalon, Names 213–7, 218–23.

38   Ayalon, Names 191–2. See also Popper, *Notes* ii, 20.

39   See section 2.2.1 below.

of posts and offices.[40] It does, however, make use of earlier studies on the functioning of the Mamluk political system and sheds new light on their findings.[41]

For reasons of space, the present study also does not provide an exhaustive survey of all texts produced during al-Ghawrī's reign, by members of his court, or for his library. It rather seeks to answer its four research questions through an in-depth analysis of its three main sources and the examination of further selected material.

1.2   What Is a Court? Theoretical and Terminological Considerations

Any attempt to apply the analytical category of "court" to premodern Islamicate societies must take into account how members of these societies referred to phenomena that modern-day English speakers understand as "courtly." As the following section demonstrates, Arabic-speakers in ʿAbbasid and Mamluk times had at their disposal a broad, highly developed, and sophisticated terminology to refer to the various social, spatial, and performative elements that defined a ruler's court, but they did not employ an umbrella term to encompass all these elements that we would readily translate as "court." Consequently, scholars wishing to employ the analytical category of "court" in the study of premodern Islamicate history must pay special attention to its proper conceptualization. The subsequent sections address this need and rely on the work of Norbert Elias and on more recent work in historical sociology, communication studies, and European history to develop a definition of what constitutes a court. This definition is intended to be sufficiently abstract to apply to different cultural contexts and at the same time precise enough to serve as a useful analytical category. On the one hand, this definition understands courts as performatively constituted through sequences of spatially manifested communicative events performed by, in the presence of, or on behalf of rulers, and on the other hand, as social groups made up by those who usually participate in these events and thus enjoy regular access to their rulers. The final section addresses the term *majlis* (pl. *majālis*) as a particularly important aspect of Islamicate

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40   For the trend in modern court studies to understand the court as not only or as primarily a system of court offices—as was often the case in earlier scholarship—see also Winterling, *Versuch* 84. The question of how meaningful the study of offices could be in premodern societies has already been raised in Weber, *Economy* iii, 1029–31.

41   On the administrative structure of the Mamluk court, see, e.g., Ayalon, Structure I; Ayalon, Structure III; Holt, Structure; Holt, Position; Sadeque, Court; van Steenbergen, *Order* 22–33; Popper, *Notes* i, 90–100.

court life and argues that provided certain conditions are met, its translation as "salon" is justified.

1.2.1   *Arabic Terminology and the Concept of the Court*

Students of Islamicate history face a challenge: premodern Arabic sources do not have a word that we can readily translate into English as the "court" of a ruler.[42] As shown by Nadia Maria El Cheikh, premodern Arabic-speakers such as those of the ʿAbbasid period "did not isolate the court as a social and cultural phenomenon worthy of literal attention [...]. Thus, they did not have a word for 'court'."[43] The word *balāṭ*, which is often used in Modern Standard Arabic as a translation of the English word "court" is, in this specific meaning, a rather recent creation that according to El Cheikh is not attested in premodern texts, where the word typically means "pavement," rather than "palace" or even "court."[44]

Premodern Arabic is certainly not the only language that does not have a word for "court." Byzantine Greek is similar in this.[45] Nevertheless, both the premodern Arabic-speaking world and Byzantium exhibited many features that can prima facie be considered "courtly" in one way or another.[46] In both areas, we even find works such as Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus' (r. 300–48/913–59) *De Ceremoniis* (On ceremonies) and Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ's (d. 468/1075) *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* (Regulations of the caliphal palace) that describe these features in rich detail.[47]

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42   El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 518; El Cheikh, Space 326. See also Bosworth, Courts 361.

43   El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 517–8. See also El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 82; and (for Ayyubid sources) Brentjes, Princes 352.

44   El Cheikh, Space 327; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 82; Konrad, *Hof* 28. See also El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 519; von Hees, Guidance 371; Lane, *Lexicon* i, 249. For a different view, see Dozy, *Supplément* i, 111, which is based, however, on late sources that were influenced by Latin usage.

45   El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 519; El Cheikh, Space 326. See also Kazhdan and McCormick, World, esp. 173–5; Vitz and Pomerantz, Introduction 5. Whether premodern Persian had a word for "court" is an issue of debate. According to Bosworth, Courts 361, *bār, bārgāh, dargāh*, and *darbār* have this meaning. Murphey, *Exploring* 208, agrees with regard to *dargāh*; and Werner, Taming 223–4, 230–1, agrees for both *dargāh* and *darbār*. However, Peacock and Yıldız (Introduction 13) note that in Seljuq Persian sources there is no "single comprehensive term for court, but rather a variety of related words." Flatt, *Courts* 13, agrees with this latter view. On the absence of an Ottoman Turkish equivalent for "court," see Peacock and Yıldız, Introduction 12–3; Konrad, *Hof* 28–9.

46   On the similarities between the Byzantine and the ʿAbbasid court, see El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 352–6, 358–67, 370.

47   On these works, see El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 527–8. On *Rusūm dār*

Given that some of the lexical units of courtly terminology that *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* and other premodern Arabic texts contain have been mistranslated in the scholarly literature and understood to represent the court in toto, a review of pertinent terms is necessary here to show that there is indeed no premodern Arabic word that combines all aspects of the meaning of the English word "court." At the same time, such a review also familiarizes readers with Arabic key terms that are important in subsequent chapters of the present study.

The Arabic terms reviewed here refer to one of three spheres or dimensions of what is commonly understood in English as a ruler's "court":[48] (1) spaces associated with the ruler, (2) a social group attached to the ruler whose members hold various functions and offices, and (3) events and occasions performed by, in the presence of, or for the ruler, as in the phrase "to hold court." The examples for the usage of the relevant words discussed here come mainly from the ʿAbbasid realm of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries and the late Mamluk Sultanate. ʿAbbasid terminology is particularly important as many later Islamicate dynasties emulated ʿAbbasid cultural life.[49] Moreover, we are fortunate to have several particularly rich sources on ʿAbbasid court terminology, including works such as the aforementioned al-Ṣābiʾ's *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* and his *Tuḥfat al-umarāʾ fī tārīkh al-wuzarāʾ* (The gem of *amīr*s on the history of the viziers) and al-Ṣūlī's (d. 335/946) *Kitāb al-Awrāq* (The book of leaves) that already received considerable scholarly attention.[50] In particular,

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al-khilāfa, see ʿAwwād, Muqaddimat al-nāshir, in al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 5–67; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 352–3; Sourdel, Cérémonial 121–2; Salem, Introduction, in al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules*; Shoshan, High Culture 70; and on the *Book of Ceremonies*, see El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 361; Cameron, Construction. Another similar work from ʿAbbasid times is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥārith al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 250/864) *Akhlāq al-mulūk* (The character traits of rulers), previously known as the *Kitāb al-Tāj* (Book of the crown) and erroneously attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9). See, e.g., El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 352; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 524; Osti, Remuneration 87–9; Rosenthal, *Thought* 75–7; Schoeler, Verfasser. For Mamluk sources containing similar information, see section 3.2.5 below.

48 For this common sense understanding of "court," cf. Konrad, Patterns 236; Spawforth, Introduction 3; Winterling, Versuch 78; Duindam, *Dynasties* 157–8. On words for "court" in European languages, see, e.g., Zotz, Palatium; Niermeyer, van de Kieft, and Burgers, *Lexicon* i, 386–8; Kazhdan and McCormik, World 172–3; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 3; Paravicini, *Kultur* 6; Starkey, Introduction 3; Rösener, Hof 66; Bumke, *Kultur* i, 78; Vale, *Court* 20–33.

49 El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 357; Bosworth, Courts 362; Sourdel, Cérémonial 121; de Bruijn, Courts 385. See also Hillenbrand, Aspects 22; Lambton, Marāsim 521–2; Naaman, *Literature* 282; Algazi, Hofkulturen 187–8; England, *Empires* 5, 15.

50 For studies on ʿAbbasid court culture, see note 7 above in the present chapter. On the most important sources, cf. El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 81; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 520–3, 525, 535. See also Marmer, *Culture* 4–9.

Nadia Maria El Cheikh's recent series of valuable articles on ʿAbbasid court ter-
minology constitutes the main basis of the following remarks on the ʿAbbasid
period.[51] In contrast, relevant late Mamluk terminology, which is of primary
interest in the present study, has until now received only very limited attention.
Hence, our discussion of Mamluk terminology must rely largely on primary
sources.[52]

The most important term pertaining to the spatial dimension of the ʿAbbasid
court is *dār al-khilāfa*, which can be literally translated as "abode of the cali-
phate," or, more idiomatically "caliphal palace."[53] While our information about
the physical makeup of the vast structures collectively known as *dār al-khilāfa*
is quite limited, we know that they "functioned simultaneously as a stage for the
representation of caliphal power, as the administrative centre of a vast empire
and as a residence for the caliphal family."[54] Still, the word *dār al-khilāfa* delin-
eated only the spatial setting of the court, denoting a specific set of buildings
that constituted a minor city of their own.[55] ʿAbbasid authors writing in Arabic
used various terms to refer to other dimensions of what we call, in English, the
ʿAbbasid court. Thus, translating the term *dār al-khilāfa* as "court" is an over-
simplification that does not properly reflect ʿAbbasid usage.[56]

In the Mamluk Sultanate, the two terms that most clearly designated the spa-
tial dimension of the court were *qalʿa* (citadel) and *qalʿat al-jabal* (citadel of the
mountain), both of which referred to the originally Ayyubid fortified complex

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51   Particularly relevant are El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts; El Cheikh, Court and
      Courtiers; El Cheikh, Prince; El Cheikh, Space; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation.

52   The present study does not discuss Fatimid court terminology in detail for three reasons:
      First, Halm, Sanders, Oesterle, and others have already examined this topic. Second, as
      the work of these scholars indicates, Fatimid terminological conventions had much less
      influence on Mamluk court life than did ʿAbbasid ones. Third, especially in its religious
      dimensions, the court life of the Shiʿi Fatimids was significantly different from that of the
      Sunni Mamluks, such that direct comparisons between these two court cultures are much
      less fruitful than in the case of ʿAbbasids and Mamluks. On these differences, see, e.g.,
      Sanders, *Ritual* 10; Oesterle, *Kalifat* 41.

53   A less common alternative is *dār al-sulṭān* (abode of power), cf. El Cheikh, Space 320. For
      dār as "abode," see Lane, *Lexicon* iii, 931.

54   El Cheikh, Space 321. See also El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 530; El Cheikh,
      Prince 203.

55   El Cheikh, Space 319–25. See also El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 530; El Cheikh,
      Prince 202–3; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 355–8; Sourdel, Cérémonial 122–8. See also
      Marmer, *Culture* 11–14. However, also see El Cheikh, Space 327; El Cheikh, Court and
      Courtiers 82, where the author speaks about a "metaphorical" use of the word, but does
      not provide further explanation or examples.

56   For an example of the translation of *dār al-khilāfa* as court, see, e.g., al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules*, subtitle.

on top of a spur of the Muqaṭṭam Hill towering over the city of Cairo.[57] Similar to the ʿAbbasid *dār al-khilāfa*, this citadel served as the stage of Mamluk ceremonial, as the center of Mamluk administration, and as the home of the sultan. Moreover, it also housed the barracks of the sultan's corps of slave soldiers. Like the *dār al-khilāfa*, it comprised so many structures that it could be seen as a small independent city. Its palaces were the primary locus of Mamluk rule. Still, the citadel and similar buildings were built *for* the court, they did not constitute the court itself.[58]

Ḥaḍra, a noun derived from a root with the basic meaning "to be or become present,"[59] is another spatial term associated with the court that appears in Mamluk and other sources.[60] Thus, the term is usually translated as "presence" or "place of presence."[61] Recently, however, Erez Naaman suggested that "*ḥaḍra* should be translated as 'court'." It is correct that the term *ḥaḍra* was used in premodern Arabic sources not only as a spatial term, but also as a designation or title for a high-ranking person, who was thus "an object of resort." In Naaman's view, this figurative meaning allows for the translation of *ḥaḍra* as "court," since the Arabic word, like the English "court," can refer to both a spatial and a social entity and hence unites "these strands of meanings."[62]

Yet in my view, while Naaman's observations are correct, they do not justify the translation of *ḥaḍra* as "court" in the full sense of this English word. Without doubt, when applied to a ruler, *ḥaḍra* can denote the first of the three dimensions of what is commonly understood as a court, that is, a particular space associated with someone who wields power. *Ḥaḍra* fails, however, to convey any sense of the two other dimensions noted above, which are discussed in more detail shortly, that is, a group of persons close to the ruler and events performed by or for the ruler. As Naaman does not claim that *ḥaḍra* is used in his sources to refer to events or occasions, we can safely state that the Arabic word

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57 For a concise late Mamluk description of the Cairo Citadel, see al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 26–7; and for its alternative designations, see Rabbat, *Citadel* 18.

58 Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 25–8; Rabbat, *Citadel* 83, 282–95. But see also Bacharach, Court-Citadel, esp. 208–9, who considers the court a spatial entity often identical with the citadel of a given city. However, Bacharach does not provide primary sources to support his understanding and does not give an Arabic equivalent for the term "court-citadel" he coined in his study. Furthermore, Bacharach is not consistent in his terminology; elsewhere in his study he presents the court as a social entity (Bacharach, Court-Citadel 212, 213, 219) and an event (Bacharach, Court-Citadel 207).

59 Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 588–9.

60 For examples from Buyid sources, see Naaman, *Literature* 22 and *passim*; and from Mamluk sources, see al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 387, 404, 415; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 34, 37.

61 Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 589.

62 Naaman, *Literature* 22 (all quotations).

does not denote this important meaning of "court." Although Naaman asserts that *ḥaḍra* and the word "court," which, as he points out, can mean "the body of courtiers collectively; the retinue [...] of a sovereign or high dignitary,"[63] share the same "strands of meanings,"[64] he does not provide any evidence that *ḥaḍra* is ever used to refer to a collective body of persons around a ruler or, indeed, any multitude of persons at all. Rather, *ḥaḍra* refers to just one person, the ruler. Thus it can fulfill the function of a title structurally comparable to "Majesty" or "Excellency" in European contexts.[65] If it is not employed as a title, *ḥaḍra* should be translated according to its basic meaning as "presence"[66] and not as "court," as it fails to convey the performative and the social meaning of the latter term.

A final Arabic spatial term that deserves attention here is *bāb* (pl. *abwāb*). This term, which is usually rendered into English as "door," "gate," or "porte" sometimes appears in Arabic sources in contexts that might suggest its translation as "court." Note, for example, the following occurrences in al-Qalqashandī's (d. 821/1418) chancery manual *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* (The dawn of the night-blind on the chancery craft), where it is written that letters from provincial governors to the sultan's seat should be addressed "to the sultanic gates" (*ilā l-abwāb al-sulṭāniyya*),[67] whereas letters coming from the sultan's seat are referred to as "documents [coming] from the sultanic gates (*ʿan al-abwāb al-sulṭāniyya*)."[68] Similarly, al-Qalqashandī quotes a text which mentions that a report about the condition of fortifications is to be dispatched "to the noble gate" (*ilā l-bāb al-sharīf*).[69] Without doubt, the Mamluk chancery was central in receiving and sending such documents, but according to al-Qalqashandī, the sultanic *bāb* or *abwāb* were considered the spaces that were of pivotal importance for the exchange of messages. This understanding is in line with other Mamluk texts. For example, one of our main sources, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, includes a passage in which a ruler refers to a messenger as having come "to our noble gates,"[70] while the chronicler Ibn Iyās (d. after 928/1522) speaks repeatedly about foreign envoys arriving at the sultan's "noble gates."[71]

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63   Naaman, *Literature* 22, quoting the online version of *The Oxford English Dictionary*.
64   Naaman, *Literature* 22.
65   Cf., e.g., the discussion of this honorific in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 498. See also Sourdel, Cérémonial 147; Bosworth, Laḳab 628.
66   This is done, e.g., in Holt, Structure 52. See also Durand-Guédy, Tents 164.
67   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* viii, 54.
68   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* viii, 99. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 498; xi, 75; xiii, 23.
69   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiii, 100.
70   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 221; (ed. ʿAzzām) 102.
71   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 265, 267.

On a first glance, it seems possible to translate the phrases "sultanic gates," "noble gate," and "noble gates" in these examples as "court." Upon closer scrutiny, however, it becomes evident that these terms do not refer to the place in which the ruler resides, but the threshold to this space. There is not a single instance, in al-Qalqashandī's work or elsewhere, in which it is said that a ruler resides in his *bāb* or *abwāb*, as one would expect if the word actually meant "court." Rather, *bāb* and *abwāb* stand for the controlled liminal space through which a message or a person enters the presence of a ruler. Texts mentioning a ruler's *bāb* "do not depict the space of the ruler's seat, but rather take it for granted. What [they] discuss, on the contrary, is the door (*bāb*) that marks the border offering controlled access to the ruler."[72] Indeed, the fact that liminal spaces used to control access to rulers receive such prominent attention in premodern Arabic texts is an important observation in itself, and this attention should not be obscured by translating the terms that denote these spaces incorrectly as "court."[73] Taken together, we thus see that while premodern Arabic comprises a rich vocabulary of spatial terms associated with what is referred to as a ruler's "court," none of these terms constitutes a near semantic equivalent of this English word.

ʿAbbasid terminology with regard to the social dimension of the court is multifaceted and—apart from terms denoting holders of specific offices—often difficult to understand and translate. One of the most important words in this context is *ḥāshiya*, which appears usually in the *status determinativus* or the *status constructus* and is inter alia translated as "servants," "retainers," "attendants," "court-attendants," and "court."[74] The *ḥāshiya*s of rulers could include their mothers, among other persons, but were considered groups distinct from soldiers, palace eunuchs (*khadam*), clerks (*kuttāb*), and employees (*mutaṣarrifūn*). In fact, from the material collected by El Cheikh, we get the impression that *ḥāshiya* designates those members of a ruler's court who did not fulfill an

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72   Von Hees, Guidance 375.

73   The so-called "Sublime Porte" or Bāb-ı Âli, a term sometimes understood as denoting the Ottoman court, is a special case. However, Bab-ı Âli is, first, an Ottoman Turkish expression that seems to have come into circulation at a comparatively late date and therefore is of only limited interest for a study of premodern Arabic terminology. Second, Sublime Porte is mainly employed in Western, not Ottoman sources, cf. Findley, *Reform* 5. Third, "the Sublime Port in a stricter sense was a distinct complex, which […] contained the household and office of the grand vezir, the offices of several officials immediately subordinate to him, and the meeting place of the grand vezir's *divan* or council" (Findley, *Reform* 5). Thus, Sublime Porte does not denote the seat of the Ottoman ruler, but rather that of his chief administrative subordinates.

74   El Cheikh, Space 327–8.

official military or administrative function, but were nevertheless part of the group of people who mainly worked and resided inside the *dār al-khilāfa*.[75]

At least in some sources, a ruler's *ḥāshiya* is seen as an entity different from his *khawāṣṣ* or *khāṣṣa*. These words, which are derived from a root with the basic meaning "to be or become special or confined," are used by 'Abbasid authors to denote people attached to the caliph in a personal way. They could include his soldiers and secretaries, but also his children, relatives, and slaves.[76] *Ḥasham* is a third term that further complicates the picture of 'Abbasid terminology. It is most often used to describe a subcategory of a caliph's *ḥāshiya*, those who receive salaries from him and are not his kin.[77] El Cheikh's comprehensive discussions of these and related, less common terms[78] clarify two aspects: First, in 'Abbasid terminology, there is apparently no one word that can be adequately rendered into English as "courtier";[79] and second, there is no term that denotes the social dimension of the 'Abbasid court as a whole.[80]

The words *khawāṣṣ* and the closely related *akhiṣṣā'* also figure prominently in sources from the late Mamluk period. Here, they usually appear together with the names of specific rulers and are used for individuals who stand in a close personal relation with these rulers and enjoy their favor. As they were, it seems, typically of the same gender as the rulers they served, *khawāṣṣ* and *akhiṣṣā'* had the privilege of direct access to their rulers and the option of accompanying them on their travels. They also joined their rulers in leisure activities such as banquets and sociable gatherings. Many of these men were civilians and served in capacities such as chief judge, private secretary, inspector of the market (*muḥtasib*), muezzin, or *imām*. Others, however, belonged to the personal armed retinue of the sultan or other army units. Their special status required a high level of loyalty. Thus, sources are particularly attentive to any sign of treachery or disfavor among them.[81]

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75 El Cheikh, Space 327–8. See also El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 82–3; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 521; El Cheikh, Prince 200–2; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 115.

76 El Cheikh, Space 328–9; on the root, see Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 746. See also Beg, al-Khāṣṣa 1098–9; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 83; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 521–2; El Cheikh, Prince 201–2; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 115, 120–1; Drews, *Karolinger* 210.

77 El Cheikh, Space 329–30. See also El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 83.

78 See El Cheikh, Space 330–1; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 84; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 521–2.

79 See also Naaman, *Literature* 18.

80 El Cheikh, Space 331, 335–6; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 84–5, 88. See also El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 522, 534–5; El Cheikh, Prince 202.

81 Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iii, 433; iv, 245, 345, 373, 380, 409, 452, 477; v, 23, 76–7. For further late Mamluk examples, see Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 51, 55; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 122; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1985; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iii, 287, 402,

A related Mamluk term is *muqarrab* (pl. *muqarrabūn*), which is attested to in the Quran (56:11) and which can have, in Modern Standard Arabic, the meanings of "close companion, favorite, protégé, intimate."[82] As the passive participle of the second form of the root *q-r-b*, its basic meaning is "someone or something brought near."[83] In late Mamluk sources, it is usually employed for a group of persons who had a relationship with a ruler that was even closer than that of his *khawāṣṣ* and *akhiṣṣāʾ*. However, there can be a certain overlap between the two groups, as some people are called both *muqarrabūn* and *khawāṣṣ* of a given ruler, at times in one and the same passage. Like the sultan's *akhiṣṣāʾ* and *khawāṣṣ*, his *muqarrabūn* could serve in official capacities such as that of *imām*, tutor of the sultan's sons, or gatekeeper (*bawwāb*) of his palaces. They sometimes also held military posts. As officeholders, *muqarrabūn* yielded considerable influence, thanks to their close relationship with the ruler and were sought after by people who needed intercession or sought a position or an office. The particular intimacy between a sultan and his *muqarrabūn* is also attested by the fact that we have several reports of rulers decrying and mourning the death of one of their intimates.[84]

In the context of the social dimension of the Mamluk court, another word, *khāṣṣakiyya*, appears frequently in our sources. Unlike some terms discussed here, this word, which is of mixed Turkic-Arabic origin, is clearly defined. In Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Saḥmāwī's (d. 868/1464) chancery manual *al-Thaghr al-bāsim fī ṣināʿat al-kātib wa-l-kātim* (The smiling mouth on the craft of the scribe and the secretary), we read:

443, 463, 472; iv, 450, 470; v, 84, 143–4, 150; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 151; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufāka-hat al-khillān* i, 241, 261; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 386; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 7, 48–9, 56; al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 10ᵛ. See also van Steenbergen, Statesman 456; Rabbat, *Citadel* 202; Vermeulen, Aspects 555; Sievert, Family 98; Eychenne, *Liens* 47. For examples of the use of this term from other periods of Islamicate history, see, e.g., Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 115, 160; Grabar, *Ceremonial* 28, 78; Lange, *Justice* 30; Halm, Oath 102; Halm, *Learning* 45; Barceló, Caliph 431; Jackson, Courts and Courtiers 365; Lambton, Mawākib 854. On the related term of *khāṣṣa* (the elite), used in Mamluk sources as an antonym to *ʿāmma* (the common people), see Lapidus, *Cities* 80–2; Beg, al-Khāṣṣa; Kennedy, *Court* 112, 115, 117, 244; von Hees, Guidance 375–9; Eychenne, *Liens* 32.

82   Wehr, *Dictionary* 755. See also Lange, *Paradise* 60, 124, 157; Dozy, *Supplément* ii, 331.

83   Lane, *Lexicon* vii, 2505.

84   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 387, 389; iv, 380, 339, 454, 465; v, 26. For further examples of the usage of this word in late Mamluk sources, see, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 401; v, 17, 66; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1739, 1888, 1985; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 54–5; vi, 30. On the term among the Mamluks, see also Eychenne, *Liens* 45; among the Safawids, Savory, Courts and Courtiers 372; among the Āq Qoyunlu, see Lingwood, *Politics* 32, 120; among the Timurids, see Subtelny, *Circles* 144; Subtelny, *Timurids* 34–5, 68; and in the Persianate Deccan, see Flatt, *Courts* 14.

The sultan's *mamlūk*s [...] are divided into six ranks (*marātib*): The first of them [is called] *khāṣṣakiyya*. This designation is given to them because they are present with the ruler when he is alone and in retreat, and they are thus granted [a privilege] that is not even granted to the highest *amīr*s of 1,000 soldiers (*akābir al-muqaddamīn*). They are present at the beginning and the end of every day during the audience (*khidma*) of the palace and that of the stable, and they ride in the ruler's mounted processions (*rukūb*) night and day. They do not fail to be present [with the ruler] near and far, and they are distinguished from others during the *khidma* by the fact that they carry their swords and wear bands of brocade on their uniforms. They may call on the ruler when he is alone without permission. They travel on the sultan's important matters and have elegant clothes and riding animals. In the past, there used to be no more than 24, in accordance with the number of *amīr*s of 1,000 soldiers, but now, there are more than 400. They [receive] ample livelihood and abundant gifts from the rulers.[85]

Al-Saḥmāwī's description of the *khāṣṣakiyya* underlines the privileged position of the members of this group. In accordance with the military character of Mamluk rule,[86] the *khāṣṣakiyya mamlūk*s appear to be a group very close to the ruler—they were his personal armed retinue. Fulfilling the function of a bodyguard, they also discharged ceremonial functions, governed minor administrative areas, and served their lord as envoys in important missions, such as arresting rebellious officials and governors. Becoming a *khāṣṣakī* was an important stepping stone in a *mamlūk*'s career, as most *amīr*s or officers were recruited from among their ranks.[87] Taken together, it is typical for late Mamluk sources to describe the social context of a given sultan by using terms

85   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 386. See also al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 115–6. In al-Ghawrī's time, the
      *khāṣṣakiyya mamlūk*s numbered almost 1,200, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 6.
86   The Mamluk Sultanate has been described as a "military patronage state" for good reason.
      For applications of this term, coined by Hodgson, *Venture* ii, 400–10, in relation to the
      Mamluks see van Steenbergen, State, esp. 193–7; van Steenbergen, Ritual 265. On patronage, see section 1.2.4 below.
87   Ayalon, K̲h̲āṣṣakiyya 1100; Conermann and Haarmann, Herscherwechsel 235. See also
      Ayalon, Structure I, 213–6; Irwin, Factions 232–3; Mostafa, Beiträge 213–4; Rabbat, *Citadel*
      135, 138, 142, 287–91; Sievert, Family 105; Africanus, *History* iii, 894; Popper, *Notes* i, 88;
      Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 148–9. For the translation of *khāṣṣakiyya* as "court officials," cf. Salmon (trans.), *Conquest* 39, 94; and as "members of the Court," cf. Salmon (trans.), *Conquest*
      95.

such as *khawāṣṣ*, *muqarrabūn*, and *khāṣṣakiyya*, though none of these terms denotes the ruler's court in its entirety as a social group.

With regard to the events and occasions associated with or related to the court, we note that authors of the ʿAbbasid period had at their disposal numerous terms to write about these topics. Most general was *marāsim*, a plural word with the basic meanings of "marks" and "signs," that could also mean "prescripts" or "assignments" and thus came to denote all kinds of ceremonies and rituals associated with the court.[88] In contrast to the social and the spatial dimension, for which we do not find a specific word, there is thus a premodern Arabic umbrella term that encapsulates most, if not all, events of a courtly character. This finding might be seen as underlining the importance of the performative dimension of premodern Islamicate court culture.

One of the most important types of ceremonies subsumed under *marāsim* was the caliphal audience or *khidma* (also *julūs* or *majlis*). Caliphs held audiences regularly in their palaces. A strict protocol regulated aspects such as the respective spatial positions of those present, appropriate clothing, the proper way to greet the caliph, the way to kiss the ground in front of the ruler, and the correct way of speaking and moving in his presence. The ruler himself was hidden behind a curtain (*sitr*) till the beginning of the audience. Then, during the ceremony, he sat on a throne (*kursī*) covered with silk, wore a black ceremonial robe, and was furnished with the symbols of rule, including the sword (*sayf*) of the Prophet, his staff (*qaḍīb*), and the copy of the Quran said to be written by the caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 47/656).[89]

Other ʿAbbasid ceremonies and rituals that were regulated by a similar level of protocol included the arrivals (sg. *ḥuḍūr*) of foreign dignitaries and ambassadors,[90] caliphal investitures (sg. *taqlīd*),[91] and banquets (sg. *simāṭ*).[92] The so-called *nawba* ceremony was another regular event at the ʿAbbasid court. In the course of this ceremony, large drums (sg. *ṭabl*) were beaten at the times of prayer. During the ʿAbbasid period, this ceremony constituted one of the most

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88   On the meaning "court ceremonies," see Sanders, *Marāsim* 518; on other meanings, see Lane, *Lexicon* iii, 1086.

89   Al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 31–74; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 29–92; for the term *julūs*, see Sanders, *Marāsim* 518. See also Sourdel, *Cérémonial* 129–42; Bosworth, *Courts* 361. On ʿAbbasid and Fatimid audiences in general, see Sanders, *Marāsim* 518–9; Sanders, *Ritual* 32–6 and *passim*; Canard, *Cérémonial* 408–11.

90   Al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 14–7; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 18–20. See also Sanders, *Marāsim* 519; Sourdel, *Cérémonial* 144.

91   Al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 93–103; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 75–80. See also Sanders, *Marāsim* 519–20; Sourdel, *Cérémonial* 143–4.

92   Sanders, *Marāsim* 520.

important symbols of rulership. Thus, as time passed, other rulers eagerly emulated and adopted it as their own.[93]

Many ʿAbbasid ceremonial events lived on, albeit often in altered form, during the Mamluk period. A ceremony equivalent to the ʿAbbasid *nawba* was regularly performed by the sultan's military band or *ṭablkhāna*, although the ruler now shared the privilege of having such an ensemble with his military commanders from the ranks of *amīr* of 40 *mamlūk*s upward.[94]

The *khidma* was another ceremony that survived into the Mamluk period, though it was transformed over the course of time. While this term is usually translated as "service"[95] and in Mamluk sources is also attested in this sense in the context of patronage relations, it also denotes events staged by Mamluk sultans that combined audiences and troop reviews. During Mamluk *khidma*s that usually took place in various localities in and around the Cairo Citadel, *mamlūk*s of the sultan and selected *amīr*s paid homage to the ruler and affirmed their loyalty. The ruler attended to administrative business, followed by a meal. In al-Saḥmāwī's time, *khidma* ceremonies were held regularly at the ceremonial hall of the citadel known as the *qaṣr* and at the sultan's stables.[96]

One of the most important events at the Mamluk court was the *mawkib* (pl. *mawākib*), a term originally meaning "cortege," that was later used more generally, to denote all kinds of processions.[97] Whereas the ʿAbbasids only rarely

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93 Al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 136–7; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 115; Hillenbrand, Aspects 28. See also Bosworth, Courts 362; Farmer, Ṭabl-Khāna 34–5; Spuler, *Iran* 349–50. On the Seljuq *nawba* ceremony, see Hillenbrand, Aspects 30–1, 35; and on the Timurid ceremony, see Gronke, Courts 367.

94 Ayalon, Structure II, 469–70. Farmer, Ṭabl-Khāna 36. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 49; Rabbat, *Citadel* 135; Frenkel, Projection 46; Vermeulen, Note 357; Popper, *Notes* i, 84; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 700. On the sultan's *ṭablkhāna*, see also al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 125; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 8–9, 13; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 659, 688–91; Stowasser, Manners 19.

95 Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 711.

96 Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 386–7, 393, 398; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 41, 46, 49–50, 67, 78; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 13; Rabbat, *Citadel* 140, 151, 228, 245; Holt, Structure 48–51. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 17, 45, 56, 64; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 666–7, 670; al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 86–7. Vermeulen, Aspects 555; van Steenbergen, Ritual 228. On the administrative work done during *khidma*s, see al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 366. For the translation of *khidma* as "court," see Busool, Empire 98; Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 116; Holt, Structure 48. On *khidma* in pre-Mongol Iran, see Paul, History (408–11 for *khidma* as ceremony); Paul, *Herrschaft* 231–445 (258–72 on ceremonies related to *khidma* and 235, 427, 434 for *khidma* as ceremony). Contrary to Paul, *Herrschaft* 444, the term *khidma* was used in Mamluk contexts for ceremonies comparable to those known by this term in pre-Mongol Iran.

97 Lane, *Lexicon* viii, 2963; Sanders, Mawākib 849. See also Sanders, Marāsim 518; and on the term in ʿAbbasid ceremonial, see Meloy, Processions 642; Sourdel, Cérémonial 140;

performed such events, among Mamluk court ceremonies, these mounted pro-
cessions that included the ruler and other high-ranking dignitaries figured
prominently. Following the accession of a new sultan at the citadel, during the
early Mamluk period the ruler rode through Cairo, carrying with him the sym-
bols of his office.[98] Later, this inauguration procession through the streets of
Cairo was often suspended and new sultans would take a short ride within the
citadel. Regular processions also took place at the sultan's attendance of the
prayer on Fridays, on the occasions of religious holidays, polo games, inspec-
tion trips, and other outings.[99]

While the *mawākib* were an element that clearly distinguished Mamluk
from ʿAbbasid ceremonial, other events, such as banquets (sg. *simāṭ*), were also
known under ʿAbbasid rule and indeed constitute a shared feature of cere-
monial life in the Islamicate world. The same is true for the regular so-called
maẓālim (lit. "injustices") sessions in which rulers dispensed justice and were
available to anyone who wanted to complain about wrongs or submit peti-
tions.[100]

Yet, even given the richness of the terminology we have examined from the
Mamluk and ʿAbbasid periods, we do not find a single umbrella term, sim-

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Sanders, Mawākib 849. Sometimes, *mawkib* was also used to denote the ceremonies usu-
ally referred to as *khidma*.

98   On Mamluk symbols of rule, see section 6.3.3 below.

99   Holt, Mawākib 612–3; Fuess, Between 153–6; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 381. For an overview
of Mamluk *mawākib*, see al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 86–7. See also the rich material included in al-
Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, e.g., iv, 7, 11, 13, 17, 22, 32, 46–9. For secondary literature, see Stowasser,
Manners 19; Levanoni, *Point* 14; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 33, 46, 49, 58; Rabbat, *Citadel*
140, 171, 238; Holt, Position 238, 242–3. For the translation of *mawkib* as "court," see Sal-
mon (trans.), *Conquest* 77. On ʿAbbasid processions, see Canard, Cérémonial 389; Sanders,
Mawākib 849–50; El Cheikh, Prince 213–4; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 365; Sanders,
Ritual 8; Meloy, Processions 642; Oesterle, *Kalifat* 98; and on Fatimid processions, see, e.g.,
Canard, Cérémonial 396–408; Sanders, Mawākib 850–1; Sanders, *Ritual*, *passim*; Oesterle,
Kalifat, *passim*.

100 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 44–5, 56; Fuess, Between 156–60; Leder, Dishes 363 (on banquets),
Vermeulen, Aspects 553–5 (on *maẓālim* sessions). See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 49;
Stowasser, Manners 17; Darling, *History* 120–1; Rabbat, *Citadel* 140, 201, 238, 253–5, 274; van
Gelder, Banquet; Levanoni, Food 211–3, 215–6, 218–9; Holt, Structure 49–51; Holt, Position
238; Frenkel, Projection 51–2; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 223–32; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbol-
isme 69–70. On Mamluk *maẓālim* jurisdiction see also Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim*; Fuess,
Between 156–60; Nielsen, *Justice*; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 223–30; Darling, *History* 120–1;
Darling, Medieval 13–4, 16; Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 201, 209; Holt, Structure 49–51; al-Qalqashandī,
Ṣubḥ 204–5, 207; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 662–8; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 38–41; Ber-
key, Mamluk Religious Policy 14–6; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 157–8; Rabbat, Significance. On
non-Mamluk *maẓālim* sessions, see Nielsen, Maẓālim.

ilar to the English "court," that comprises the spatial, social, and performative dimensions of court life. Depending on the context, a ruler's *marāsim*, such as his *khidma, mawkib*, or *simāṭ* took place in the *dār al-khilāfa* or the *qalʿa* and were conducted and attended by his *khawāṣṣ*, his *ḥāshiya*, or his *khāṣṣakiyya*, yet in premodern Arabic there existed no single hypernym that expressed the broader context to which all of these terms belonged. Thus, we must agree with Maria Subtenly when she speaks about "the absence of an abstract notion of the court"[101] in premodern Islamicate sources.

One could argue that given the absence of an indigenous term for "court," scholars of Islamicate history should avoid this concept completely and instead exclusively use the premodern terminology they find in their sources. However, such a plea to drop the term "court" altogether is not only unrealistic, but indeed counterproductive. First, the term is already so widely used in the scholarly literature on Islamicate history that no attempt to avoid it could ever be entirely successful in this growing field.[102] Second, numerous Europeans who spent time in the Near East in the pre- and early modern periods used the term "court"—or its equivalent in other European languages—when writing about their experiences. While we should not naively follow these travelers in their interpretations of societies that were alien and often incomprehensible to them, their usage of the term "court" shows that, in their subjective understanding, they encountered phenomena in Islamicate societies that were structurally similar to the courts of Europe.[103] Third, and most importantly, avoiding the term "court" would mean unnecessarily abandoning an analytical meta-category that can be extremely helpful for our understanding of the history of the premodern Islamicate world in general and its political, religious, cultural, literary, intellectual, and social life in particular.[104] Moreover, arguing

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101 Subtelny, *Circles* 115.

102 Even works such as Roy Mottahedeh's seminal *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, which seeks to base its analysis on the "self-description" (Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* xi) of the societies studied, fall back on the concept of "court" without giving an Arabic equivalent, see, e.g., Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 38, 112, 125, 129, 184.

103 Cf. for examples Darling, *History* 133; Marmon, *Eunuchs* 13; Wijntjes, Visit 550; Suriano, *Treatise* 190.

104 For related arguments, see Spawforth, Introduction 6; Konrad, *Hof* 29–30. The concept of "pedagogy," which has proven its analytical value in numerous studies, is similar, given that no equivalent premodern Arabic term exists, cf. Günther, Principles 73. Another example is the concept of "sexuality": Although *jinsiyya* and *jinsāniyya* (the modern Arabic equivalents of "sexuality") only came into being during the fourteenth/twentieth century (cf. Massad, Desire 371–2), numerous authors fruitfully use this concept in the study of pre- and early modern Islamicate societies, such as, e.g., Babayan and Najmabadi (eds.), *Sexualities*; Leoni and Natif (eds.), *Eros*; Schneider, *Frauen*, esp. 103–15. However, on the risks

that courts existed only in those societies that had a word for this concept, that is, primarily those of the Latin West, essentially endorses claims of Western exceptionalism and thus supports Eurocentric interpretations of premodern global history. Finally, denying the existence of courts in the premodern Islamicate world would severely curtail our ability to study topics such as political culture and the representation of rule from an intercultural and comparative perspective.

Thus, instead of simply avoiding the term "court," students of Islamicate history should develop a clear theoretical understanding of this concept that can be usefully applied to premodern Arabic-speaking societies without naively imposing alien cultural categories on them.[105] To this end, it can be helpful to see how neighboring disciplines such as historical sociology and European history have come to understand the concept of "court" and then modify their results as necessary to suit the Islamicate context.

1.2.2   *Norbert Elias and the Court in Historical Sociology and European History*

In stark contrast to the situation in Islamicate history, for decades historians and sociologists working on pre- and early modern European societies have dedicated themselves to the close study of numerous individual courts and to the analysis of the historical phenomenon of the court in general. The author who stands as a towering figure at the beginning of this ongoing boom of European court studies is the German sociologist Norbert Elias (1897–1990). Since the first publication of his *Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie* (1969), Elias' work has remained one, if not the most important, point of reference for scholars working on courts both within and beyond the borders of Europe.[106]

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of the anachronistic application of "homosexuality" to pre- and early modern Islamicate societies, see Massad, Desire; El-Rouayheb, *Homosexuality*. On "encyclopaedia" and "encyclopaedism" as further examples of terms that have no premodern Arabic equivalent, but nevertheless constitute helpful analytical categories, see Muhanna, Century 344–7; Muhanna, *World* 10–1; von Hees, Encyclopaedia 173; and critically Weaver, What. On "dialogue" as a similarly anachronistic category, see Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 4.

105   Related disciplines that deal with primary sources which do not feature terms readily translatable as "court" follow similar trajectories of research and use "court" as an analytical category. See, e.g., Jacobs and Rollinger (eds.), *Achämenidenhof*; Gundlach and Klug (eds.), *Der ägyptische Hof*; and Spawforth (ed.), *Ancient Monarchies*. For the Persianate world, Meisami, *Court Poetry* ix, argued that terms such as "court" and "courtly" "remain useful conceptual tools" as long as they are "subject to proper definition."

106   Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 1–2. On the importance of Elias' work, see also, e.g., Ali, *Culture* 9; van Berkel et al., Introduction 1–2; Keshani, Theatres 448–9; El Cheikh, Court

Elias' interest in courts is an aspect of his greater project of a sociological analysis that seeks to understand how modern Western societies came into being. He studies prominent steps of this "civilizing process" (*Prozeß der Zivilisation*) in a comprehensive two-volume work published in 1939 under this title.[107] Elias' other major work, *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, which is based on his *Habilitationsschrift* finished in 1933 (but published more than thirty years later because of the political situation in Germany) focuses on one of the most important steps of this process, namely the development and formation of court societies.[108] Taking the French royal court of the eleventh/seventeenth to early twelfth/eighteenth century as an example, in this work Elias seeks to understand why and how at a particular point in history, a largely stable social position emerged and provided individuals with extraordinary opportunities to exercise power (*Machtchancen*), that is, the position of the king as found inter alia in early modern European courts.[109]

Elias understands the term "court" as denoting a specific social "figuration,"[110] that is, a social phenomenon stabilized by numerous interconnected and interdependent individuals that often exists longer than the individuals that originally created it, as the latter can be replaced by others who fill their social positions. Within such a figuration, human beings have specific possibilities to maneuver (*Handlungsspielraum*), but are also constrained by their dependency on other individuals. However, a figuration comes into being only through and by the individuals that construct it and thus has no independent existence. Without human beings, there can be no figuration.[111]

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and Courtiers 80; Opitz, Einleitung 7; Opitz, Quellen 51, 53–4; Duindam, Versuch 370–1; Duindam, Observer 89; Asch, Hof, Adel und Monarchie 117; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 364, 367; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 584; Konrad, *Hof* 19; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 26–32; Asch, *Hof* 1; Asch, Introduction 2–3; Daniel, *Hoftheater* 24; Paravicini, Zeremoniell 12; Spawforth, Introduction 4; Adamson, Making 9; Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 396; Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 18; Duindam, Royal Courts 6–8; Duindam, *Vienna* 7; Duindam, Point 32; Paravicini, *Kultur* 63, 66; Duindam, History 91–2, 103; Conermann, Hof 13; Vale, *Court* 17.

107   Elias, *Prozeß*. On the publication history of the work, see Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 13.

108   Opitz, Einleitung 7. See also Opitz, Quellen 40; Duindam, Versuch 370–2; Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 123. On the relationship between *Der Prozeß der Zivilisation* and *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, see, e.g., Duindam, Versuch 370–1; Duindam, Observer 88–9. On material in *Der Prozeß der Zivilisation* relevant to court studies, see, e.g., Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 124–6, 129–32; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 363–5; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 570; Treibel, *Soziologie* 57–8, 60; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 13–7.

109   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 10–3. On Elias' sociology of power, see Treibel, *Soziologie* 75–9.

110   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 10.

111   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 46–7, 55–6. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 215–8, 315–9. On Elias' concept

The court was a figuration in which hundreds or thousands of individuals served, advised, and accompanied the ruler and were interconnected through means of a hierarchy of ranks and a particular etiquette. They shared a specific, that is, courtly, character.[112] Yet, at least in the case of the early modern French royal court, a more precise definition is possible: "What we refer to as the 'court' of the *ancien régime* is, to begin with, nothing other than the vastly extended house and household of the French kings and their dependents, with all the people belonging to them in a broader or narrower sense."[113] Here, "house" and "household" refer, as Elias makes clear, primarily to social and not to spatial entities.[114] The court was highly important to the king and his rule: Whatever came to the king or passed from him had to go through the social "filter" of the court, which was, therefore, the prime intermediary between the king and his country.[115]

The French noblemen and noblewomen who belonged to the king's court—the "court society"[116] as Elias calls them—were not only in ongoing competition with one another, but also had to secure their position against those who stood below them in rank. To this end, they were forced to cultivate a particular, representative, and often very expensive way of life that distinguished them from other social groups. For them, luxury and pomp were not just a source of pleasure or the result of deficient self-control, but an inevitable necessity to preserve their social status and defend it against upstarts and competing social peers. Using Thorstein Veblen's concept of "conspicuous consumption,"[117] Elias argues that the French nobility had to consume exquisite and costly goods and services to maintain a level of representation befitting their social status. Their high expenditures for food, wine, clothes, or housing thus did not constitute acts of waste, but were dictated by social obligation and were required in order to retain their ranks.[118]

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of figuration, see, e.g., Opitz, Quellen 55–7; Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 101–23; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 572; Treibel, *Soziologie* 69–75; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 14; Duindam, History 91.

112   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 60–2. See also Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 127.

113   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 68, quoted according to Elias, *Society*, trans. Jephcott, 41, slightly modified.

114   E.g., Elias, *Gesellschaft* 80–1, 85.

115   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 69.

116   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 9.

117   For the first formulation of this concept, see Veblen, *Class*, esp. 49–69. See also Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 8–9; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 92.

118   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 88–90, 98–101. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 102–5, 416–7.

The relation between the nobility and the king is another topic that Elias studies in detail. According to Elias, it was in the king's interest to keep the members of the nobility in a state of constant competition, lest they join forces and threaten his position. The king, therefore, used the court to keep the nobility in a state of dependency and ongoing rivalry, which in turn shaped their values, beliefs, and convictions. Bereft of other opportunities to make a living, the members of the nobility needed the ruler's favor (and the court offices, donations, and titles that it could entail) to secure their social position.[119] The king, well aware of the nobility's dependency, employed courtly etiquette and ceremonial to create a large array of meticulously differentiated and dynamic ranks and positions in order to fuel the competition among his court society. Its members, clustered around the king in a physical sense as well, sought to outpace each other in gaining the king's favor and thus, indirectly, in obtaining the necessary resources to keep or improve their often unstable social position. Etiquette became an instrument of rule that allowed the king to promote, reward, or punish members of his court society as he saw fit, and to play them against each other—the well-known mechanism of "divide and rule." No individual member of the court was able to change the etiquette—and thus the web of interdependencies that characterized this figuration—without threatening their own position. The "apparatus of competition"[120] that characterized the court and was governed by the courtly etiquette went on unceasingly, like a social *perpetuum mobile.*"[121]

The establishment of the French court society gave rise to a particular elite culture associated with this social group, that is, a "court culture"[122] that governed the ways members of the court spoke, moved, loved, and evaluated the world around them.[123] In order to succeed as members of court society, individuals had to develop a specific kind of rationality, which Elias calls "courtly rationality."[124] They had to control their affects and emotions and develop the ability to think and plan long-term, in order to improve their chances for

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119   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 105–10.

120   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 135.

121   Direct quotations, Elias, *Gesellschaft* 135; indirect quotations Elias, *Gesellschaft* 123, 126–38, 181–2. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 152–5, 157–8, 192–200, 272, 278–9, 295, 309–11; Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 127–32; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 589; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 19–21; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 84, 95. On the king's entanglement in a net of courtly interdependencies that limited his options for action, see Elias, *Gesellschaft* 206–14, 219, 223, 310.

122   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 280.

123   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 280–1.

124   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 141.

prestige and high status. For them, acting rationally meant investing their financial and other resources to maximize their social position. While this is different from the rationality of untitled entrepreneurs who sought to get the most from their resources by calculating economic profit and loss, the behavior of those at court should not be seen as irrational or governed by whims and affects.[125]

The king himself used courtly etiquette to ensure that others were able to perceive and experience his exalted position: "This, then, is the meaning of etiquette […]. It is not mere ceremony, but an instrument of rule over the subjects. The people do not believe in power that may exist but is not visible in the appearance of the ruler. They must see in order to believe."[126] By means of the words and actions that were regulated by courtly etiquette as "symbols of power,"[127] the king made sure that his position was recognized by everyone around him.[128] But he also used etiquette to support and protect those members of his court society who, unlike the higher levels of the nobility, had no independent basis for their status and were essentially upstarts, totally dependent on the king's goodwill. In promoting the rise of such men and women, including high administrative officials and mistresses, the king established a counter-weight against the noble members of his court society and added an additional variable to the courtly competition.[129]

Despite its tremendous impact on other disciplines and its status as a "groundbreaking"[130] study, specialists in Islamicate history have paid only very limited attention to the theoretical framework laid out in *Die höfische Gesellschaft*. If these scholars engage with it at all, they often limit themselves to superficial references or motto-like quotations of key passages;[131] indeed, there

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125   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 140–3. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 168–70, 419–24; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 366; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 17, 21; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 35–6, 95; Asch, *Hof* 36–7. On the irrationality of courtly behavior, see Mozzarelli, Prince 35.

126   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 179, translation partly quoted from Elias, *Society*, trans. Jephcott 118.

127   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 203.

128   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 203. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 204–6.

129   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 182–4. See also Elias, *Gesellschaft* 300–1; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 20.

130   Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 1.

131   Marmer, *Culture* 3, states that he was "highly influenced" by *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, yet he never refers to this work again in his study. Luft, Gottesstaat 26, 40, includes two quotations from *Die höfische Gesellschaft* but does not discuss them in greater detail. Naaman, *Literature* 62, refers, in passing, to Elias' thoughts on courts, but does not engage with *Die höfische Gesellschaft*. The brief references to Elias' work on courts are more substantial in von Hees, Guidance 378; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 82; El Cheikh, Conversation 84, 95; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 1–2; Eychenne, *Liens* 30, 469, 491; Yarbrough, *Friends* 172. Other aspects of Elias' work, especially elements of his theory of the civilizing process,

is not a single example of a comprehensive and well-thought out attempt to apply the theoretical insights of Elias' *Die höfische Gesellschaft* to the history of Middle Eastern societies.[132]

While it is rare for scholars to state explicitly why they do not employ a particular theoretical framework,[133] we can name several reasons *Die höfische Gesellschaft* had only a very limited influence on research about Islamicate courts. First and foremost, Elias' work has been severely criticized by subsequent generations of scholars working on European courts, both with regard to its content and its methodology.[134] Among other points, several authors have shown that Elias' understanding of the French absolutist monarchy—and the position of the nobility within it—was based on concepts originating in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries CE. Many of these concepts have since been refuted, a fact that shakes much of Elias' work to its very foundations.[135] Moreover, Jeroen Duindam demonstrated that Elias' understanding of the role of the king in relation to the nobility and the competition within specific social groups, as well as the role played in this context by courtly etiquette, is only partially consistent and does not match what we now know of the historical situation. In particular, it is an oversimplification to see courtly etiquette in its entirety as an instrument developed and used by the king to discipline his court society.[136] Furthermore, Elias' selective approach to his sources and his methods of analysis fall short of modern scholarly standards.[137]

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received more attention by scholars working on Islamicate history, see, e.g., Allsen, Robing 308; Clifford, Ubi Sumus 57–9; Sievert, Family 86; Frenkel, *Culture* 6; Hanna, *Books* 75–6; Levanoni, Food 201, 203, 219; Naaman, *Literature* 66–7, 262–3.

132   Until now, the most comprehensive attempt to apply Elias' insights on courts to Islamicate societies is Emma J. Flatt's work on the Persianate courts of the South Asian Deccan, see Flatt, *Courts*, esp. 14–5, 280, 301.

133   An exception is Korn, Art 397, who argues that "[t]he court of the Artuqids and their neighbours did not include a large entourage. They had little to do with 'courtly society' in the sense of Norbert Elias, where the structure of a whole class was built around the royal court."

134   For a lucid overview of the most important points of criticism, see Asch, Hof, Adel und Monarchie.

135   Duindam, Versuch 373–5; Duindam, Observer 89–90, 97–8; Asch, Hof, Adel und Monarchie 120. See also Duindam, Versuch 383; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 367; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 586–8; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 22; Spawforth, Introduction 5; Duindam, Royal Courts 7; Duindam, History 92.

136   Duindam, Versuch 375–82. See also Duindam, Observer 96; Asch, Hof, Adel und Monarchie 127–31; Vale, Ritual 16–7; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 588.

137   Duindam, Observer 89–90; Opitz, Quellen 50–3. See also Duindam, Versuch 382–3; Duindam, *Vienna* 8; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 361, 367–8; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 573–81, 587; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 21–2; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 96; Duindam, History 92.

Apart from these points pertaining to the question of whether or not Elias' work remains useful for the analysis of early modern European courts, we may also ask under what circumstances—if at all—it can be used as an analytical tool for the study of non-European societies. In the introduction of *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, Elias argued that the court of early modern France was structurally similar to those of China, India, and the empires of antiquity.[138] However, in the course of his study, he focuses exclusively on the French example, to such an extent that the applicability of his results even to other parts of premodern Europe has been called into question, with several studies pointing to the significant problems that arise from attempts to use Elias' theories in relation to European courts outside France. In light of these results, it is extremely doubtful whether Elias' results can be applied to courts in non-European societies.[139]

In the case of Islamicate societies, in which ideas and concepts of rulership are often expressed, performed, and legitimated with reference to the religion of Islam, another element of Elias' sociology is particularly noteworthy. Unlike numerous founding fathers of this discipline, Elias paid almost no attention to the sociology of religion.[140] Probably for this reason, he did not discuss religious symbols and discourses in courtly contexts in any detail. While this fact does not rule out the possibility that his results might still be relevant for the study of Islamicate courts, it suggests, at least, a need for considerable modification and adaption. Furthermore, Elias' basic understanding of the court as the ruler's expanded household appears problematic in the context of Islamicate courts, given that numerous studies on Islamicate courts suggest that we must understand a ruler's household as an entity distinct from his court.[141]

On the surface, these observations seem to suggest that a naïve application of Elias' theories to Islamicate courts would have limited analytical value and might even lead to misinterpretations and conceptual confusion. Nevertheless, Elias' work includes several valuable insights that are still relevant and can continue to be an important point of reference for those studying pre- and early

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138   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 10. See also Baumgart and Eichener, *Einführung* 123–4.

139   On Elias' Eurocentric perspective, see also Orthmann and Kollatz, Introduction 11.

140   See also Duindam, Versuch 383; Duindam, Royal Courts 7; Asch, Hof, Adel und Monarchie 124–5; van Dülmen, *Gesellschaft* 370; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 591–2; Duindam, History 103.

141   Yosef, Groups 9; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 85, El Cheikh, Prince 202; El Cheikh, Space 332; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 523; Naamen, *Literature* 281–2. See also Konrad, *Hof* 22; Konrad, Patterns 237; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057. On Mamluk households, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 60–3; Sievert, Family 100–5; van Steenbergen, *Order* 95–6; van Steenbergen, State 195–6; Richards, Amirs; Eychenne, *Liens* 61–99, 160–4; Eychenne, Entité; Loiseau, Maison; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 68–78, 139–40, 265–84.

modern courts, as is attested by the ongoing interest in his writings.[142] Among other elements of Elias' theory, his understanding of the court as a social entity that is characterized by the elite status of its members and a high level of competition among them deserves special attention. Moreover, his insight that rulers were willing to support particularly those members of the court without alternative sources of power is still valid, as is the fact that direct access to the ruler could be a most important and sought-after resource for the members of the court. Furthermore, Elias' observations that power must be made visible and experienced in order to be recognized and that ceremonies and courtly etiquette are a central means to this end are in line with recent findings. In this context, it is also noteworthy that the behavior of members of court society who spend their resources on representational objects and activities should not be conceived as irrational, but indeed as engaging in a rational strategy given their social position. Finally, Elias' concept of a particular elite culture associated with court society, that is, a court culture, continues to be useful, not as part of a clear-cut dichotomy between "mass culture" and "elite culture," but rather as an indication that members of courts could develop distinct cultural practices.[143]

In the wake of the boom of European court studies triggered by the publication of *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, numerous historians and social scientists presented alternative theoretical approaches to the study of courts and came forth with a broad variety of definitions of this concept. The present study makes no claim to review all of these approaches and definitions. Their multitude, more than anything, demonstrates the complexity—or indeed impossibility—of developing a unified understanding of the term "court" that could claim universal applicability and theoretical validity.[144] Rather, the study at hand focuses on two recently developed and interrelated theoretical perspectives that promise to be of particular value for the study of the late Mamluk court in particular and premodern Islamicate courts in general. These perspectives

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142   On the relevance of Elias' work for present-day scholarship, see also, e.g., Opitz, Quellen 55–8; Spawforth, Introduction 5–6; Duindam, History 96–8, 100, 103–4.

143   See also Konrad, *Hof* 20, 26–8, 131; Konrad, Patterns 237.

144   For overviews of different approaches, see, e.g., Bihrer, Curia; Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 91–2, 96–9; Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 20–3; Paravicini, *Kultur* 63–4. On the problem of definition, see, e.g., Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 15–7, 24; Asch, *Hof* 12; Asch, Introduction 7–10; Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 2–6, 34; Daniel, *Hoftheater* 26; Bihrer, Curia 248–9; Gunn and Janse, Introduction 2, 4; El Cheikh, Space 325–6; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 517; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 80; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 1–2, 4; Larner, Courts 677–81; and on the question of universal applicability, see Duindam, *Dynasties* 157–9.

integrate many of the results of Elias' work that remain relevant and important, but at the same time offer clearly distinct alternatives to the more problematic aspects of his thought. The first of these perspectives sees the court as a series of events with communicative significance, whereas the second focuses on the court as a social entity.

1.2.3   *The Court as a Series of Occasions and Acts of Communication*

One of the most creative recent approaches to developing a theoretical understanding of the concept of "court" begins with the observation that happenings such as audiences, receptions, investitures, banquets, festivities, processions, hunts, and religious services are constitutive of every court. Indeed, as Ronald G. Asch has argued, the court as a social reality comes into existence only when rulers convene and stage such events, that is, when they "hold court." Thereby, rulers allow persons who do not belong to their households to take part in events they stage, to benefit from their largesse, and to acquire monetary or other benefits.[145] In contrast to Elias' work discussed above, Asch writes: "In this sense, the court was less an institution—as the royal household—, but rather an event that took place when the ruler held court. Where such an event was sufficiently rare, one can say that no court in the proper sense existed."[146] Elsewhere, Asch observed that "a court only exists when a prince 'holds court'."[147] Based on this fundamental insight, Asch saw the court as constituted by a "series of occasions."[148]

Among the studies that have subsequently taken up this catchphrase, Felix Konrad's work on Egyptian courts of the thirteenth/nineteenth century figures prominently.[149] Konrad subscribes to Asch's view that "the court is a phenomenon that is established only through the recurrent event of holding court."[150] The innovative character of Konrad's writings lies, inter alia, in the

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145   Asch, *Hof* 12. See also Konrad, Patterns 236; Konrad, *Hof* 22; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057. On the significance of Asch's work, see Duindam, Versuch 371; Konrad, *Hof* 20; Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 2.

146   Asch, *Hof* 12–3. For this differentiation between the institution of the household and the court, see also Griffiths, Wars 46, 53–4. On the understanding of "institution" fundamental for this approach, see Stollberg-Rilinger, Impact 315. On the court as an event or occasion, see also Vale, *Court* 28–9, 31–3.

147   Asch, Introduction 9.

148   Asch, *Hof* 13. See also Asch, Introduction 8, and (critically) Gunn and Janse, Introduction 3. The phrase was first used by Griffiths, Wars 48.

149   In the following, I rely heavily on Konrad's work; however, I have updated and enhanced it to meet the needs of scholars studying premodern Islamicate courts.

150   Konrad, Patterns 236.

fact that he combines Asch's understanding of the court as a series of occasions or events with insights from the field of communication studies that, over the last few decades, have attracted particular attention from authors working on European and other courts.[151] Following this line of research, Konrad argues that the events that make up the court have a "communicational character."[152] He thereby takes up three arguments first presented by Ute Daniel:

(1)   A court is a means of communication employed by rulers to reach out to other courts and their populace. Given their limited abilities to exercise direct control over their territories, pre- and early modern rulers used—and had to use—their court, which they could influence directly and personally, to express, represent, and legitimate their position. Their target audiences were other courts and their rulers, as well as their own subjects.[153]

(2)   Communication is constitutive for the court, as communicational processes define its social borders and its internal structure. In order to maintain and demonstrate their supreme status, rulers actively shaped the makeup of their courts, for example, by deciding who was allowed to attend certain events, occupy offices, or fulfill specific functions.[154]

(3)   Over time, courts developed specific ways to communicate that constitute what is understood as "courtly."[155]

Taking up this line of reasoning, Konrad emphasizes that courtly occasions constitute acts of communication.[156] He thereby builds on the work of Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, one of the most prominent advocates of a communication-centered approach in historical research[157] who argues that in principle, almost

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151   On the unbroken importance of this communication-centered approach, see, e.g., Bihrer, Curia 260–1; and for the broader context, see Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 489–92; Beihammer, Approaches 1–2; Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozeß 584, 588; Gunn and Janse, Introduction 6.

152   Konrad, Patterns 237. See also Konrad, *Hof* 25.

153   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 27–9.

154   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 27. See also Bihrer, Curia 260; Schlögl, Kommunikation 19; Hirschbiegel, System 43 and 44; von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 11, 14; Melville, Spiele 180, 181; Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 37.

155   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 27, 34–8.

156   Konrad, Patterns 237.

157   Stollberg-Rilinger's model of communication is based on that of Niklas Luhmann, cf. Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 493. Unlike Luhmann's original model, Stollberg-Rilinger's model is specifically designed to suit the needs of scholars interested in past acts of communication. Other elements of and inspirations for Stollberg-Rilinger's theory come from the works of Ernst Cassirer, Alfred Schütz, Emil Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Turner, cf. Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 490.

all human actions that address other people can be understood as acts of communication. They only need to fulfill three conditions: (1) a piece of information is present, it is (2) transmitted as a message by the sending agent, and (3) it is understood as a message by the receiving agent.[158] To differentiate between information and message, Stollberg-Rilinger uses the example of a fire: Smoke coming from a fire is just an indication or information that something is burning. It only becomes a message if it is used by a person as a smoke signal to communicate with another party. In Stollberg-Rilinger's words: "A [piece of] information is *perceived*, a message is *understood*."[159]

This concept of communication applies to verbal and non-verbal methods of communication. Verbal communication allows for the communication of messages with higher levels of complexity and abstraction; these messages are concomitantly less prone to misunderstandings.[160] Understanding, however, is an important aspect of acts of communication, which can be considered successful when leading to one or more subsequent acts of communication.[161] In Stollberg-Rilinger's words:

> Communication is always a reciprocal occurrence between two or more agents that relate to each other [...]. The presence of an act of communication, however, does indeed not mean that the receiving agent ascribes to the message exactly the meaning that the sending agent had intended, or even that he accepts and adheres to what the message says. It merely means that he takes it as a message and reacts to it by way of communication, even if negatively.[162]

Yet, communication is not only reciprocal, it is also collective, in the sense that certain conventions and rules of communication—and thus behavior—are negotiated and shared within social groups.[163] By communicating according to the rules, people performatively[164] contribute to and stabilize the collective character of their respective group of reference: "[S]ocial reality is [thus]

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158   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 492–3.
159   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 493.
160   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 493.
161   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 493. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Impact 314.
162   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 493–4.
163   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 494. See also Füssel and Rüther, Einleitung 10.
164   In the present study, performance is understood as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman, *Presentation* 22). On performance and communication, see Bauman's still fundamental study, Bauman, *Art*. On

(re-)produced by agents through acts of communication. With these acts, they produce meaning through speech, behavior or performance. Seen from this perspective, acts of communication are constitutive elements of the self-conception of a social group or even the group itself."[165] The fundamental relevance of these insights for students of bygone societies lies in the fact that through the study of acts of communication, we can understand the social conventions that defined these societies and thereby grasp the values, rules, and categories that were typical for them, and indeed the history of these acts themselves, given that "all historical phenomena can be treated as communication processes."[166] To this end, we can study sources that bear witness to and were parts of past acts and practices of communication.[167] Practices are thereby understood as "actions or deeds that are repeated over time; they are learned, reproduced, and subjected to risk through social interaction. [...] They tend to be intelligible to others in context-depending ways."[168] Practices allow those who perform them not only to signify meanings, but also play a role in constituting their "selves" as social beings.[169]

Symbolic communication is of prime importance for the study of premodern societies in general and their courts in particular. "Symbolic" is understood here not in a broad sense as referring to all kinds of verbal or non-verbal signs.[170] Rather, symbolic communication constitutes a specific type of communication that differs from both instrumental actions and the conceptual-discursive type of communication. Whereas instrumental actions aim at a specific goal, symbolic actions—such as acts of symbolic communication—point beyond such goals by creating meaning of a higher order (*Sinnstiftung*) and by evoking or alluding to shared cultural concepts. Needless to say, a specific action can have both an instrumental and a symbolic character, depending on how it is viewed by a given observer.[171]

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performance in the study of premodern courts, see Bihrer, Curia 261; Vitz and Pomerantz, Introduction 4–13; Vitz and Pomerantz, Epilogue.

165   Konrad, Patterns 237, building on Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 495. On the social construction of reality, see the fundamental study of Berger and Luckmann, *Construction*.

166   Stollberg-Rilinger, Impact 313.

167   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 496. See also Althoff and Stollberg-Rilinger, Spektakel 16–7.

168   Wedeen, *Visions* 15.

169   Wedeen, *Visions* 15.

170   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunkation 496–7. See also the fundamental study of symbols in political communication in Kertzer, *Ritual*, esp. 2–5, 11.

171   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunkation 497–8. According to Stollberg-Rilinger (Zeremoniell 390), most actions have at least a symbolic component.

As for the differences between symbolic and the conceptual-discursive communication, Stollberg-Rilinger notes:

> Whereas conceptual, discursive communication [1] takes place in sequences of statements that follow chronologically one after another [...], [2] allows for highly complex and abstract statements due to syntactic rules of combination, and [3] inherently aims at unambiguity, symbolic communication is concentrated in a single moment, manifest, ambiguous, and indistinct, and thus leaves more room for various connotations and ascriptions of meaning.
>
> Thus, here symbolic communication means communication by way of symbols in the narrower sense; symbols are understood as a specific kind of verbal, visual, objective, or gestural signs such as [...] metaphors, images, artifacts, gestures, complex sequences of actions such as rituals and ceremonies, but also symbolic narratives such as myths, etc.[172]

Various correlating symbols can be combined to communicate complex sets of cultural concepts, evoke emotions, and confirm shared values and norms.[173]

The multifaceted series of actions generally known as rituals and ceremonies are of special significance for the study of Islamicate and other premodern societies.[174] Rituals and ceremonies have been the subject of debate in various academic disciplines and seem to elude all efforts to arrive at generally accepted definitions.[175] Authors often use them more or less interchangeably, thus partially forsaking their analytical potential.[176] In the context of studies of premodern societies and their courts, however, a differentiation first introduced by Karl Leyser has gained a certain level of general recognition. According to Leyser's understanding, rituals consist of a standardized sequence of symbolic actions and cause a change of social, religious, or other status.[177]

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172 Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 499–500. See also Konrad, Patterns 237; Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 391; Stollberg-Rilinger, Impact 315–6; Althoff, Grundvokabular 150.

173 Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunkation 501–2. See also Weller, Ordnen 200; Althoff, Einleitung 2.

174 On the importance of rituals, see, e.g., Beihammer, Approaches 1; Adamson, Making 27; Duindam, Point 86–100; and on their communicative character, e.g., Marsham, Architecture 90, 107.

175 Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 502. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 391; Beihammer, Approaches 6; Mörke, Symbolism 37. For overviews of ritual theories, see, e.g., Belliger and Krieger (eds.), *Ritualtheorien*; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Rituale*.

176 Paravicini, Zeremoniell 14.

177 This definition builds on Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 503–4; Paravicini, Zeremoni-

> Rituals have performative character: They not only *say* something, but
> *do* something; they cause what they signify and place their participants
> under an obligation to act accordingly in the future. […]. Rituals cannot
> be carried out by accident; they are staged as [rituals] and are usually per-
> formed publicly, demonstratively, and solemnly.[178]

By participating in a ritual, individuals affirm their consent to the induced
change—or changes, as many rituals are polyvalent.[179] This, however, does not
mean that all participants ascribe exactly the same meaning and significance
to a given ritual. As acts of symbolic communication, the meaning of rituals is,
to a certain degree, ambiguous. While this fact might appear to be a deficiency,
ultimately, it adds to the potential of rituals, which can act as stabilizing factors
in societies and allow different groups with divergent convictions to take part
in one and the same act of symbolic communication.[180] A person's deliber-
ate absence from a ritual can thus serve as a particularly strong expression of
opposition and disagreement. Moreover, if a critical number of potential parti-
cipants do not attend, it can endanger the successful performance of a ritual as
a whole.[181] Agents can also change an existing ritual to modify its meaning and
adopt it to new circumstances.[182] By contrast, while ceremonies are also stand-
ardized sequences of symbolic actions, they do not cause changes in status, but
merely represent and express an existing order.[183]

Acts of symbolic communication such as rituals and ceremonies are usu-
ally not performed spontaneously, but are the product of rational processes of
reasoning by specific agents.[184] Why did premodern agents resort to symbolic
communication? What were the possible functions of symbolic acts of com-

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ell 14. Both Stollberg-Rilinger and Paravicini rely on Leyser, Ritual 2. See also Stollberg-
     Rilinger, Zeremoniell 397; Althoff and Stollberg-Rilinger, Spektakel 15–7; Oesterle, *Kalifat*
     76.

178   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 503. See also Weller, Ordnen 203; Althoff, Einleitung
     13.

179   On the polyvalence of rituals, cf. Leyser, Ritual 11–2; Marsham, Architecture 90; Sanders,
     Ritual 5–6.

180   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 506, 519, see also 514; Kertzer, *Ritual* 11, 69; Althoff and
     Stollberg-Rilinger, Spektakel 16.

181   Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 395. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 514.

182   Althoff, Variability 73, 86.

183   This definition builds on Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 504; Paravicini, Zeremoni-
     ell 14. Both authors rely on Leyser, Ritual 2. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 397;
     Althoff and Stollberg-Rilinger, Spektakel 15–6; Weller, Ordnen 200.

184   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 492.

munication in premodern societies, which were characterized by a generally high level of symbolic communication?[185]

As Stollberg-Rilinger notes, symbolic communication plays a decisive role in the continuous confirmation and stabilization of collective norms,[186] values, and the social order:

> Every society continually assures itself that its values are still valid and that its norms have been stable in the past, are presently stable, and will be stable in the future; [it does this] by means of symbolic actions, which manifest [these] norms and values in a punctually condensed form that can be perceived by the senses. In the practice of symbolic [actions], the categories [constituting] the social order are both perceived empirically and experienced as normatively valid. The power of the symbolic […] creates affective bonds as well as a belief in values that precedes all rational and discursive justifications.[187]

Symbolic communication thus makes the social order and the cultural values that characterize it appear as meaningful, factual, and indisputable. This insight not only helps to explain the stability of religious systems in premodern societies, but also elucidates how differences in rank, social status, and gender roles were upheld.[188]

In the context of court life, this stabilizing function of symbolic communication serves as a backbone by which to legitimate the difference in social status between the ruler and the ruled.[189] In this context, the significance of symbols can be summed up as follows:

> Since hierarchy is a precondition of rule, symbolic visualisation of that hierarchy is an integral part of the technique of rulership. It cannot be denied that physical force and material resources such as, for example,

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185   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 490, see also 513–4; Beihammer, Approaches 3; Althoff, Demonstration 28–9, 48. On the functions of rituals as a specific type of symbolic communication, see, e.g., Leyser, Ritual 25; Beihammer, Approaches 2–3; Althoff, Variability 72–4, 86; Sanders, *Ritual* 6–7.

186   On the interrelation between norms and communication, see also Schlögl, Kommunikation 17.

187   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 505. See also Althoff, Einleitung 12; Füssel and Rüther, Einleitung 9.

188   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 505–6.

189   Mörke, Symbolism 31. See also Kertzer, *Ritual* 132.

the administrational and military apparatus, are effective instruments with which to impose rule. However, the potential of such forces to secure rule can last only for a short time unless they are backed up by a consensus between rulers and ruled concerning the normative basis of the socio-political system in which both live. This consensus has to be proved in everyday communication, as well as in particular demonstrations confirming their mutual relationship.[190]

In light of the limited ability of premodern rulers to force their will onto others, they strove to legitimate their authority by means of a general consensus that recognizes the current hierarchical order as in line with generally shared norms and values.[191] Moreover, rulers have an interest in explicating, manifesting, and thus (re-)creating the differences of status among the members of the ruling group.[192] The social hierarchy established in this process can be understood as having no "objective reality";[193] instead it consists of a mutually recognized system of claims for and ascriptions of status, a system that is stabilized and enacted through acts of symbolic communication,[194] that thus forms a "symbolic order."[195] According to this understanding, performing acts of symbolic communication—the "symbolics of power,"[196] as Clifford Geertz called it—is very much at the center of premodern social and political life.[197]

Yet, rulers must be aware that in addition to its stabilizing and legitimating function, acts of symbolic communication can also be employed in conflicts about social prerogatives in a given social order and about the general validity of that order.[198] Thus, on one hand, agents can use acts of symbolic communication, such as coronation rituals or anointing rites, to show that only they (and

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190   Mörke, Symbolism 31. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 507–8; Stollberg-Rilinger, Öffentlichkeit 149; Cannadine, Introduction 15.

191   Mörke, Symbolism 35, 37. See also Beihammer, Approaches 3–4.

192   Barceló, Caliph 443. See also Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 135–6; Cameron, Construction 130–1; Paravicini, *Kultur* 69.

193   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 509.

194   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 509, 517–8. See also Schlögl, Kommunikation 17.

195   Melville, Spiele 183. See also Melville, Spiele 183–5.

196   Geertz, Centers 150.

197   Cannadine, Introduction 3. See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 389; Füssel and Rüther, Einleitung 9. For the special case of political rituals, see Beihammer, Approaches 2; Kertzer, *Ritual, passim.*

198   Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunikation 506–7. On acts of symbolic communication in conflicts, see also Bourrée, Rituale, esp. 58–60.

no other agents) are justified in their claims to rulership in the extant social order. On the other hand, symbolic communication can also be used to argue that an entire social order should be replaced by another one, as for example, during the French Revolution when the citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille—a prison for political prisoners that had become a particularly detested symbol of the monarchical regime.[199]

The concept of *courtly representation* allows for a clearer understanding of the specific features of symbolic communication in courtly contexts. Werner Paravicini defines "representation" in the context of court studies as follows:

> Representation is the manifestation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of something absent or invisible in the realm of social relations by means of media of various kinds (bodies, clothing, language, texts, coats of arms, inscriptions, pictures, portraits, thrones, letters, presents) or [by means of] symbolic interaction […] or communication (architecture, spatial structure, entries, processions, feasts, and celebrations).[200]

Paravicini's definition of the multifaceted term representation[201] has the advantages of being particularly clear and compatible with the concept of symbolic communication. With regard to the particular case of *courtly* representation, we can supplement Paravicini's definition and describe courtly representation as a specific type of dramatization by means of symbolic communication that serves to manifest and (re-)produce the elevated status of the ruling elite and the conceptual framework that supports it. Courtly representation thereby creates and reaffirms the common identity of the ruling elite and sets it apart from other social groups.[202] Moreover, it embodies and commemorates norms and values that define the self-conception of the ruling elite and thus helps to legitimate its social position.[203] Hence, rulers whose position is

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199   For the French Revolution as an example, see Stollberg-Rilinger, Kommunkation 510–1.

200   Paravicini, Krieg 15. See also Paravicini, Zeremoniell 14; Althoff, Demonstration 29.

201   On the term in European languages, see Ragotzky and Wenzel, Einführung 1–5; Hofmann, *Repräsentation*.

202   My understanding of "identity" follows Wedeen, *Visions* 16–7, 217–8, which sees identities "as what results from public speech and action" (16) and underlines their performative qualities.

203   Ragotzky and Wenzel, Einführung 7–8. The aspect of commemoration is taken from Oesterle, Namensnennung 156. My rephrasing of the passage from Ragotzky and Wenzel follows, in part, Konrad, Patterns 237–8. See also Konrad, Überlegungen 1058; Konrad, *Hof* 25–6.

not fully legitimated or those who have to compensate for a loss of influence are often particularly ambitious in staging representative events that support and affirm their status.[204]

Courtly representation is of key significance for the stability of hierarchically stratified premodern societies:[205] It makes the exalted position of the ruling elite perceivable, observable, and even something that can be experienced, and thus also real for those who do not have a share in it.[206] To quote Norbert Elias' key argument: "The people do not believe in power that may exist but is not visible in the appearance of the ruler. They must see in order to believe."[207] But courtly communication is not only directed at a ruler's subjects. It is also—and often primarily—oriented toward other rulers and ruling elites who raise competing claims to supreme status. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of representation at a given court, we should pay attention to both domestic and foreign addressees.[208]

This last observation is also relevant when rulers engage in activities that can be interpreted as displays of luxury, pomp, and conspicuous consumption. While earlier generations of scholars understood such activities as manifestations of the moral deficiencies of rulers, more recent work on premodern political culture underscores the rational social functions behind these activities and even the way they constitute a necessary strategy in some instances.[209] By surrounding themselves with expensive objects and luxury items and by

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204 Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 397. For an Islamicate example, see El Cheikh, Prince 212–3; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 359.

205 Paravicini, Zeremoniell 14, on the siginificance of representation for social stability. See also Mörke, Symbolism 35–6.

206 On "elite" and "non-elite" in Mamluk contexts, see, e.g., Conermann, Volk 319–21, 327; Elbendary, *Crowds* 5–7; Amitai, Elites, esp. 133–7.

207 Elias, *Gesellschaft* 179, translation partly quoted from Elias, *Society*, trans. Jephcott 118. See also Duindam, Court Life 183. For a similar statement in an Islamicate context, see Barceló, Caliph 426–7. On the interplay of power and symbolic communication via rituals and ceremonies, see Cannadine, Introduction 4, 6, 12, 15, 19; Duindam, Observer 94–6; Hirschbiegel, Macht, esp. 6, 11–2; Beihammer, Approaches 6; Kertzer, *Ritual*, esp. 29–34, 37, 104; Barceló, Caliph 442–3; Leder, Dishes 359–61.

208 This insight was first discussed, at considerable length, in Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 153–60, 163, 170. See also Daniel, *Hoftheater* 22, 25; Paravicini, Nachahmung 15; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 18, 20; Stowasser, Manners 15; Necipoğlu, *Architecture* 68–9.

209 On the necessity of this strategy, see Paravicini, Attraktion 271; Bastl, Fisch 126; Ewert and Hirschbiegel, Verschwendung 106, 110; and on the rationality of luxury, see Paravicini, Attraktion 279–80; Ewert and Hirschbiegel, Verschwendung 116–9. See also Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 15; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 34; Paravicini, Alltag 16.

consuming valuable goods and services, rulers and members of the ruling elite followed a specific communicative strategy that manifested their social position and set them apart from others while integrating them in their peer group to reaffirm the extant system of social relations.[210] Moreover, by spending large amounts of material resources on their subjects, rulers signaled that they were able and willing to fulfill some of the most important social obligations connected to their position, such as behaving with generosity and rewarding loyalty and those who served them well.[211]

This understanding of luxury as a rational strategy of communication is not exclusively a product of modern theoretical reflections. It has a noteworthy early forerunner in Ibn Khaldūn's (d. 808/1406) analysis of the "emblems of the ruler" (*shārāt al-malik*) included as the third chapter of his famous *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena). Ibn Khaldūn, who spent the last years of his life in the Mamluk Sultanate,[212] writes about the characteristics that set rulers apart from their subjects:

> It should be known that the ruler has emblems [*shārāt*] and arrangements [*aḥwāl*] that are the necessary result of pomp and ostentation. They are restricted to him, and by their use he is distinguished from his subjects, his intimates, and all other leaders in his dynasty. [...]
>
> The various rulers and dynasties differ in their use of such emblems. Some of them use a great many, others few, according to the extent and importance of the given dynasty. [...] [The Muslim rulers of the past] used [such emblems] and permitted their officials to use [them], to increase the prestige of royal authority and its representatives.[213]

In this passage, Ibn Khaldūn considers certain material objects and modes of behavior the prerogatives of rulers who use them to boost their prestige as sovereigns. Moreover, the degree to which a ruler can employ such "emblems and arrangements" is proportional to his authority and that of his dynasty. However, Ibn Khaldūn does not end his analysis here. In his discussion about the elab-

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210   Paravicini, Attraktion 281. See also Bastl, Fisch 123, 125–7; Weber, *Economy* i, 1106; Ewert and Hirschbiegel, Verschwendung.

211   Paravicini, Attraktion 279–80. On largesse as a courtly phenomenon, see also Ewert and Hirschbiegel, Verschwendung 108.

212   On Ibn Khaldūn's time in Egypt, see Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn*.

213   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 48, 50. Arabic terms added from Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* ii, 36, 38.

orate inscriptions embroidered with gold or silver thread (known as *ṭirāz*) that decorated clothes worn or given away as presents by rulers,[214] he continues his reflections:

> Royal garments are embroidered with such a *ṭirāz*, in order to increase the prestige of the ruler or the person of lower rank who wears such a garment, or in order to increase the prestige of those whom the ruler distinguishes by bestowing upon them his own garment when he wants to honor them or appoint them to one of the offices of the dynasty.[215]

In Ibn Khaldūn's view, luxurious clothes thus fulfill a clear social function: They affirm and augment the prestige of rulers and their beneficiaries and appointees. Thus, courtly luxury appears not as a waste of resources, but as a strategy employed by rational agents with specific goals. Moreover, according to Ibn Khaldūn, being able to produce and give away embroidered clothes is a direct indication of the authority of a given dynasty. He continues: "When luxury and cultural diversity receded with the receding power of the (great) dynasties, and when the number of (small) dynasties grew, the office [of the supervisor of the *ṭirāz* production] and its administration completely ceased to exist in most dynasties."[216] Thus, luxurious clothes with *ṭirāz* decorations are, according to Ibn Khaldūn, something peculiar to great dynasties, while most small ones are not able to produce them. Only important rulers such as the Mamluk sultans keep up the *ṭirāz* production "in accordance with the importance of the realm (of that dynasty) and the civilization of its country."[217]

Here we could also refer to other expensive and splendid items that Ibn Khaldūn considers "emblems of royal authority,"[218] such as thrones, large tents, or prayer enclosures (sg. *maqṣūra*).[219] It is noteworthy that Ibn Khaldūn's perspective on the subject of luxury items is very similar to that of modern historians; both view them not as signs of squander per se, but as instruments

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214   Walker, Rethinking 181–2.
215   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 65–6, transliteration adjusted.
216   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 66. On *ṭirāz* production, see Marzouk, Institutions.
217   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 67. On the Mamluk use of *ṭirāz*, see Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 198–202; Mayer, *Costume* 33–4; Walker, Rethinking 168–9, 181–2.
218   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 67.
219   See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 53, 67–9, 69–70, respectively. On late Mamluk symbols of rule, see also section 6.3.3 below.

used by rulers to manifest their claims to sovereignty.[220] Later Muslim polit-
ical thinkers, such as al-Ghawrī's contemporary Faḍl Allāh b. Rūzbihān Khunjī
(d. 927/1521) went one step further and even argued that luxury was necessary
for rulers: "When a ruler does not furnish himself with items of extravagance
(*takallofāt*) in his palace and, amid the people, with chattels, horses, and retain-
ers [...], then the people will not obey him, and the affairs of the Muslims will
be neglected."[221]

Khunjī's reference to the ruler's palace leads us to the question of space in
the context of courtly communicative events. Although the approach outlined
here (and with it the present study) does not understand courts as identical
with topographical entities such as palaces or encampments,[222] it neverthe-
less recognizes the importance of space as a category in the analysis of court
occasions.[223] The present study argues, however, that no space is courtly per se;
it only becomes so when courtly events are staged in it. Thus, there is no space
that can be identified as the "court" in and of itself. Spaces derive their courtly
qualities only from what takes place there, in the presence of and on behalf of
rulers. Hence, the approach followed here sees space as a second-order aspect
of what defines a court.

With its focus on the defining role of courtly events for what can be referred
to as courtly spaces, the present study builds on earlier publications arguing
that the "'court' [...] could be found wherever [...] [the ruler] happened to
be."[224] This insight is particularly important given the fact that premodern
rulers were often highly mobile and staged courtly events in various localit-
ies throughout their realm in order to make their status known to their sub-
jects at large, reaffirm their exalted position, and maintain control over their
territory even when technological conditions made direct domination from
afar difficult at best, to name just the most obvious motivations.[225] While
itinerant rulership has received ample attention in studies on European his-

220 However, in Ibn Khaldūn's theory of civilization, overindulgence in luxury causes a dyn-
     asty's downfall, see, e.g., Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 111.

221 Khunjī, *Sulūk al-mulūk* 83.

222 On the disadvantages of conceptualizing courts as spatial "containers," see von der Höh,
     Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 11.

223 For definitions of space, see Cassidy-Welch, Space 2–4, building on Lefebvre, *Space*. On the
     importance of this category, see Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 396–7; Füssel and Rüther,
     Einleitung 11–3.

224 Hillenbrand, Aspects 23. See also Balabanlilar, Lords 32; Conermann, Hof 13; Naaman, *Lit-
     erature* 2.

225 Balabanlilar, Lords 32. See also Durand-Guédy, Where.

tory,[226] its significance for various premodern Islamicate dynasties, including the Umayyads,[227] Ghaznawids,[228] Seljuqs,[229] Almohads,[230] Marinids,[231] Ilkhanids,[232] Timurids,[233] and various other dynasties in the Maghrib[234] remains incompletely understood.[235] Nevertheless, the growing body of research on Islamicate practices of itinerant rulership underlines the need to identify the court not with a single space, but to focus on the performative means and courtly events through which spaces acquire courtly qualities.[236]

On a more local level, the issue of where a given courtly event takes place is of great significance for its communicative meaning, as is the spatial arrangement of the people and material objects involved in it. During court events, space served as a symbolic indicator of the status and the relative position of those involved, that is, the social order.[237] Courtly space was never neutral, but "hierarchical and politically charged"[238] and thus ideally suited for use in symbolic communicative acts.[239] For example, where a courtly event is staged,[240]

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226 E.g., Solnon, *Cour*; Fey, *Reise*; Müller, *Itinerar*; Bernhardt, *Kingship*. For global approaches, see Destephen, Barbier and Chausson (eds.), *Gouvernement*; Duindam, *Dynasties* 161–6.

227 Borrut, *Mémoire* 396–443; Borrut, Pouvoir 249–66. See also Scheiner, Aspekte 596–7.

228 Kennedy, *Caliphate* 192; Inaba, Rulers 75–98.

229 Durand-Guédy, Tents; Durand-Guédy, L'itinérance; Durand-Guédy, Where; Hillenbrand, Aspects; Paul, *Herrschaft* 59–60.

230 Jones, Preaching 73, 89, 101.

231 Bennison, Drums 205–6.

232 Durand-Guédy, L'itinérance.

233 Balabanlilar, Lords 31–3; O'Kane, Tents 249–51, 253–5; Melville, Itineraries.

234 Pellat, Maḥalla.

235 See, however, Vitz and Pomerantz, Epilogue 243–4.

236 For a noteworthy episode of late Mamluk itinerant rulership, see Ibn al-Jīʿān, *al-Qawl*. I thank Yehoshua Frenkel (Haifa) for pointing me to this text.

237 Stollberg-Rilinger, Zeremoniell 397 (on space and symbolic communication); Cassidy-Welch, Space 2–3 (on space as a social marker). See also Stollberg-Rilinger, Öffentlichkeit 152, 156; Füssel and Rüther, Einleitung 10, 13; Kertzer, *Ritual* 30, 105–6. For studies on the representative and ceremonial role of architecturally formed spaces in the Islamicate world, see, e.g., Rabbat, Throne Halls, esp. 125; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 356–8, 368–9; El Cheikh, Space 319–25; Necipoğlu, *Architecture*; Necipoğlu, Ḳânûn 211–3; Keshani, Theatres; Grabar, *Ceremonial*; Sanders, *Ritual*; Frenkel, Projection 40–5; Franz, Castle, esp. 353–4, 359, 376; Rabbat, *Citadel*, esp. 83, 283–95; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel; Woodhead, Perspectives 169–70; van Steenbergen, Ritual, esp. 231–2, 241–4, 263–4; Bacharach, Court-Citadel 223–6; Rabbat, *Staging*; Fuess, Between; Milwright, Fixtures, esp. 105–7; and for a comparative perspective, see Oesterle, *Kalifat* 28–9, 250–311.

238 Adamson, Making 13, see also Dillon, *Language* 6; El Cheikh, Space 325. On the hierarchy of spaces in Islamicate palaces, see Rogers, Architecture 63.

239 See Dillon, *Language* 6, who speaks in this context about the "metaphorical" character of palace topographies.

240 On courtly events being enacted on "stages" usually identified with palaces, see, e.g.,

within the inner part of a ruler's residence (behind thresholds)[241] or within its outer and more easily accessible areas, is critically significant, as this location influences not only the audience of the event, but it also reflects and illustrates the meaning of the event in the mind of those who enact it.

Moreover, it is important to note that space "is not really a fixed material feature, but is constructed by the way it is occupied. Our mental maps of physical structures stem from our understanding not only of the material elements of those spaces but of how their occupants functioned within them."[242] This constructedness of spaces is clear, for example, in cases in which the same physical space is used for different courtly occasions, after it is "reconstructed" and endowed with a new meaning through conscious processes of symbolic re-configuration. To this end, the symbolic messages associated with physical spaces are modified through the manipulation of their aesthetic qualities so that they fit the needs of specific events and those involved.[243]

These insights about the constructedness and symbolic reconfigurability of spaces also help us to understand in more depth how spaces can acquire courtly qualities. The specific form of "occupation" that courtly events constitute reconfigures the "mental maps" of those participating in or learning about them. In this process, the spaces in question acquire new meanings that are linked to the events staged by and for rulers and are thus endowed with mediated courtly qualities that allow us to think of them as "courtly spaces." Hence, we can conclude that spaces are important not only for the messages communicated by courtly events, but, in return, are also modified and shaped by these events.

Taken together, courts are understood according to the theoretical perspective outlined here as constituted by series of occasions which are acts of—often symbolic—communication performed by, in the presence of, or on behalf of rulers[244] within certain spaces and, inter alia, serve to represent their status. Following this approach, events with communicative and representative char-

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Dillon, *Language* 10; Gunn and Janse, Introduction 9; Necipoğlu, *Architecture* xvi, 60–1, 66, 68, 250; Rogers, Architecture 63; El Cheikh, Prince 203; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 351, 355; El Cheikh, Space 321; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 530; van Steenbergen, Ritual 230, 233–4; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel, *passim*.

241   On thresholds, see Dillon, *Language* 6; building on Adamson, Making 13.

242   Dillon, *Language* 6. See also Füssel and Rüther, Einleitung 12.

243   El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 360–1. See also El Cheikh, Space 323.

244   On the centrality of the ruler, see, e.g., Hirschbiegel, System 49, who states that "one cannot think of a court without a ruler." See also Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 6; Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 23; Ehlers, Hofkultur 13–4.

acter, such as parades and processions,[245] entries,[246] recessionals, travels,[247] religious rituals and ceremonies,[248] festivities,[249] banquets,[250] performative displays of special clothing,[251] investitures,[252] receptions, audiences, and salons[253] gain center stage in the study of premodern courts.[254] Moreover, this perspective draws attention to texts,[255] buildings, and other material objects that played a role in or bear witness to these occasions. When interpreting these courtly events, historians can use the same questions we would employ in the analysis of any act of communication, such as: Who initiates the act of communication?[256] Who is the intended audience?[257] Who is the de facto audience and how does it react?[258] Is the attempt to communicate successful?[259] What is communicated?[260] Why is it communicated?[261] How is the respected mes-

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245 On the representative functions of processions in the Islamicate world, see, e.g., Canard, Cérémonial 416; Meloy, Processions 642; Lambton, Mawākib 853; Oesterle, *Kalifat* 25–8, 74–9. For Mamluk examples, see, e.g., Frenkel, Projection 47–9; Stowasser, Manners 19; Bresc, Entrées 88–92; van Steenbergen, Ritual, *passim*; Wollina, News 289–91; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme 61, 64–9; and section 6.3.3 below.

246 On the symbolic meaning of entries, see, e.g., Mörke, Symbolism 39. For Mamluk examples, see Frenkel, Projection 46–7, 49.

247 On travel as a symbol of rulership in various cultures, see Geertz, Centers, esp. 153.

248 On the representative function of Mamluk religious ceremonies, see Frenkel, Projection 50–2; and sections 5.1.1.1 to 5.1.1.3 below.

249 On Mamluk festivities as occasions of communication between the ruler and the ruled, see Herzog, Culture 138–9; and section 6.3.3 below.

250 On banquets in the Islamicate world, see van Gelder, Banquet; van Gelder, *Banquet*. On meals as an element of premodern communication and signification of status, see Althoff, Demonstration 39–41; Müller, *Fürstenhof* 38; Bumke, *Kultur* i, 242–3, 247; and on their symbolic meaning in the Mamluk realm, see Levanoni, Food, *passim*; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme 70; and sections 5.1.1.2, 5.1.1.3, 5.2.2, 6.3.2, and 6.3.3 below.

251 On clothes as social markers in Mamluk society, see, e.g., al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 88; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 347; Martyr, *Legatio* 240–3; Wollina, *Alltag* 184–8, 193–4, 201; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme 70–3; and sections 6.2.2 and 6.3.3 below.

252 For Mamluk examples, see Frenkel, Projection 48, 50.

253 See section 1.2.5 below on this term.

254 For important courtly occasions in European contexts, see, e.g., Duindam, Court Life 183; Duindam, Observer 92–3; Althoff, Demonstration 28–9; Paravicini, Zeremoniell 15–6. For relevant Mamluk events, see Frenkel, Projection 45–6.

255 On Mamluk literary texts as elements of acts of communication, see Bauer, Communication, esp. 23 and 53; Bauer, Anthologien, esp. 94, 98, 100; Mauder, Head.

256 Beihammer, Approaches 11.

257 Konrad, Patterns 238; Konrad, *Hof* 3.

258 Bihrer, Curia 261. See also Beihammer, Approaches 11.

259 Dillon, *Language* 15–6, on possible problems in courtly communicative strategies.

260 Konrad, Patterns 238; Konrad, *Hof* 3; Beihammer, Approaches 11.

261 Beihammer, Approaches 11.

sage transmitted?[262] What is the context of the message?[263] While it is often impossible to clearly answer all of these questions when approaching past acts of communication through the lens of often highly selective sources,[264] they can nevertheless serve as valuable guidelines in the study of specific events.[265]

1.2.4   *The Court as a Social Entity*

As both Asch's and Konrad's work makes clear, we can further enhance the analytical potential of the theoretical understanding of the court as a series of occasions by combining it with a related approach that focuses on the social dimension of the court and is primarily interested in people, rather than events.

By taking up his earlier reflections on the court as a series of events, Asch develops the following understanding of the court as a social entity:

> In accordance with the interpretation of the court as a phenomenon that becomes visible only in a series of occasions, that is, in fact, constituted by [these occasions], one must count among [the members of] the court in general those persons who participate in these events. This participation could of course happen in very different forms—the spectrum ranges from the role of a mere observer [...] to the active shaping [of the events]. At the court, it was primarily the ruler himself who shaped [events] and took action, and in this sense, those who belonged to the court were primarily those who were close to the ruler and were involved in his actions.[266]

Building on Asch's work, Konrad neatly defines the court in a social sense as "the social group that usually participates in the occasions wherein the ruler holds court and thus [...] gain[s] access to the ruler."[267]

Konrad uses Elias' term "court society" to refer to the court in this social sense.[268] The present study also uses this term whenever it is necessary to refer

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262   Konrad, Patterns 238.
263   Konrad, Patterns 238, Marsham, Architecture 89–90 (for the specific case of rituals).
264   Beihammer, Approaches 11. See also Sanders, *Ritual* 10.
265   For a similar approach that highlights the "intelligibility" of semiotic activities in contrast to "deep-seated meanings" that are often inaccessible to historical research, see Wedeen, *Visions* 17 (both quotations), 218–9.
266   Asch, *Hof* 14. See also Konrad, *Hof* 22.
267   Konrad, Patterns 237. See also Asch, *Hof* 14; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057.
268   Konrad, Patterns 237. See also Konrad, *Hof* 24, 26–8, 131; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057.

explicitly to the court as a social group.[269] "Court," in contrast, is employed as an umbrella term that combines the various dimensions of this concept as outlined here and allows us to speak of the court metaphorically as "a social and cultural space."[270] "Court culture," in turn, is defined as a set of specific communicative "codes or symbolic forms"[271] that are shared and understood among the members of court society who engage in practices of "exchange and adoption"[272] to create it.[273]

Asch and Konrad point out that a ruler's court society is not identical with the household. The latter is a social institution that includes the ruler's family members and servants. These persons usually have living quarters in the ruler's residence and form a relatively stable institution that exists regardless of whether the ruler is present. The men and women who make up this institution, however, do not necessarily have to be members of the ruler's court society, although there may be an overlap between the two entities.[274] The heirs apparent usually take part in courtly events and normally have direct access to rulers and are thus clearly members of their court societies. At the same time, they are typically also part of the inner family of rulers and hence part of their household. But, for example, while a scullion in the ruler's kitchen is certainly part of the institution of the household, he may never attend a courtly event or have access to the ruler, and thus stands outside the latter's court society. In contrast, a high-ranking religious figure, such as a bishop or Sufi *shaykh*, might regularly partake in courtly events, but is nevertheless not part of the ruler's

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269 On the related term "courtier" and the problems of defining it, see Duindam, Royal Courts 2–3.

270 Konrad, *Hof* 25, reformulating Asch, *Hof* 15. See also Konrad, *Hof* 23.

271 Conermann, Networks 20. For a related semiotic approach to the definition of culture, see Geertz, Description, esp. 14, 17; and for a critical appraisal of such approaches in Islamicate contexts, see Ahmed, *Islam* 247–57. In a broader sense, Conermann, Mamlukology 13, defines culture "as a creative force of life as a whole, encompassing the ways of life, patterns of perception and forms of communication of the different groups, strata, sexes and classes [of a society]." This broader understanding of culture is implied in the present study in terms such as "Mamluk culture."

272 Conermann, Mamlukology 19.

273 On court culture, see also, e.g., Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 14–5; Evans, Institution 484–5; Asch, Introduction 9; Geary et al., Courtly Cultures 192–3; Ehlers, Hofkultur; Duindam, History 101–2; Duindam, *Dynasties* 273–6.

274 Konrad, Patterns 236–7; Asch, Introduction 8–9. See also Asch, *Hof* 14–5; Konrad, *Hof* 22–3; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057. On the interrelations and differences between households and courts, see Paravicini, Alltag 10, 21–2; Paravicini, *Kultur* 67–8; Gunn and Janse, Introduction 2.

household—unless he concomitantly fulfills functions analogous to those of a court chaplain.[275]

The conceptualization of "court society" proposed here is interrelated with the communication-focused approach to the court outlined earlier. This approach sees court societies as shaped by communicative processes and relationships, both with regard to their internal structure and their differentiation from other social groups,[276] given that, as Ute Daniel states, "communication itself […] caused integration and exclusion, rise and fall."[277]

For any member of a court society, their chances to communicate with the ruler are of pivotal importance, as the latter usually occupies the central position in the communicative events and occasions that are determinative for court society membership. In her study of ʿAbbasid and Byzantine courts, El Cheikh uses a theater metaphor to express this situation: "There was a large number of 'courtiers' […] who were simultaneously performers, extras, and the first row of [the audience]. The emperor and caliph, respectively, were the stars of the show."[278] The fact that the court, as a social entity, usually disintegrates upon the death or dismissal of the rulers further underscores their central role.[279]

Being able to communicate directly with the ruler defines not only whether a given person is a member of court society, but also offers tangible advantages, as the ruler is generally able to decide about the allocation of benefits such as political influence, offices, and material goods.[280] Hence, those who control access to the ruler—such as, for example, doormen and chamberlains—are

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275   Even Jeroen Duindam, whose work currently represents the most prominent attempt to identify the courts of rulers with their households, seems to regard the two as separate entities when he writes: "More than the numbers of lesser servants at court, or the upper layer of leading officeholders, these […] [nobles holding honorary offices] can be seen as the 'court society'. They were the typical courtiers, the social group that claimed membership of the court and enjoyed rights of access, but was mostly absent, living in city palaces or landed estates throughout the realm," Duindam, Point 80.

276   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 27.

277   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 30.

278   El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 528. See also El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 369.

279   Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 238.

280   Starkey, Introduction 5, 13; Paravicini, Alltag 15. In studies on courts, the assertion that direct access to rulers can represent a valuable asset is almost commonplace. See, in particular, Althoff, Verwandtschaft; Raeymaekers and Derks (ed.), *Key*; and for Islamicate societies, see, e.g., Marmer, *Culture* 13–4, 72, 184, 219, 329; El Cheikh, Space 332–5; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 85–7; Naaman, *Literature* 25; Talbot, Shadow; Truschke, Familiarity.

often very influential in a given court society.[281] But at the same time, direct communication with the ruler can also pose risks, as conflict with the ruler—and a subsequent "fall from grace"—can result in dismissal from court society, in addition to other, possibly more severe, consequences.[282]

Instead of conceptualizing court society as consisting of just two clearly differentiated groups—an "inner" and an "outer" court—as is sometimes done in studies of European courts,[283] it may be more suitable to imagine it as a number of fluid concentric circles arranged around the ruler, with members moving from one circle to the other depending on their current relationship with the ruler. Its outermost circle does not constitute an impermeable boundary, but allows a steady exchange of people entering and leaving court society.[284]

As Elias indicated, a high level of rivalry usually characterizes social relations in court society. While this does not rule out the formation of factions, members usually struggle primarily for themselves in the "existential situation of competition"[285] typical for this social formation, as they are in a steady contest to acquire limited resources, such as material goods and offices, but also political influence, status, rank, and the ruler's favor. Once gained, these resources must be defended against contenders and invested for profit.[286]

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of types of capital is helpful to gain a deeper understanding of what members of court societies compete for.[287] Defining

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281　Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 519; Paravicini, Alltag 15; El Cheikh, Chamberlains 146. See also Paravicini, Fall 17; Paravicini, Strukturen 4; Duindam, Observer 92.

282　Daniel, *Hoftheater* 30–1. See also Paravicini, Alltag 11; Marmer, *Culture* 13; Eychenne, *Liens* 51; Vitz and Pomerantz, Epilogue 244.

283　Rösener, Hof 66. See also Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 12; Jaspert, Mendicants 112, 114; Spawforth, Introduction 4; von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 13; Duindam, *Dynasties* 168–73. A differentiation between the inner and outer court can be helpful in Islamicate courts, such as the Ottoman court, that employed it, see, e.g., Konrad, *Hof* 59–62; Sievert, Favouritism 276; Reindl-Kiel, Audiences 176–8.

284　The idea of the social fluidity of courts goes back to Walter Map, cf. Map, *De Nugis* 2; and that of concentric circles builds on von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 12. See also Ehlers, Hofkultur 13–4; Paravicini, *Kultur* 68; El Cheikh, Space 335; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 85; Duindam, Point 39–40.

285　Daniel, *Hoftheater* 34.

286　Duindam, Versuch 380–1; Paravicini, Alltag 19; Winterling, Versuch. See also Geary et al., Courtly Cultures 189; Naaman, *Literature* 2, 104–11, 280; England, *Empires, passim*; Ehlers, Hofkultur 18; Marmer, *Culture* 1; von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 13; Melville, Spiele 181–2; Duindam, Point 101–2, 105–8; Yarbrough, *Friends* 167–72; Flatt, *Courts* 112–4.

287　See Schlögl, Kommunikation 16–7, on the compatibility of this concept with communication-focused approaches in court studies and Clifford, Ubi Sumus 57–61, on the relevance of Bourdieu's work for Mamluk studies. Recent examples of the application of

"capital" as "accumulated work, either in material form or in internalized, incorporated form,"[288] Bourdieu distinguishes between three types of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital can be easily converted into money; its typical form of institutionalization is property rights.[289]

Cultural capital appears, according to Bourdieu, in three forms: Incorporated cultural capital has the structure of "permanent dispositions of an organism."[290] It is acquired through a process of internalization that requires personally invested time and can be referred to as "learning." Persons own incorporated cultural capital in such a way that it becomes a permanent element of them, a habitus. Unlike economic capital, one cannot exchange incorporated cultural capital on a short term basis, as it is impossible to donate, sell, or bequeath. Its transmission requires time and necessarily stops when its owners die or can no longer remember significant information. Objectified cultural capital, in contrast, is more easily transferable, as it is located in material carriers such as books or machines. Its use, however, is usually tied to incorporated cultural capital: One can buy a library, but one needs the ability to read—or the means to hire someone who has this ability—to benefit from it. Finally, institutionalized cultural capital appears in modern societies usually in the form of educational or academic titles that confirm cultural competences and make them comparable.[291]

Bourdieu provides the following definition of "social capital": "Social capital is the sum of effective and potential resources that are connected to the possession of a permanent network of more or less institutionalized *relations* of mutual acquaintance and recognition; or, to put it in another way, it concerns resources that depend on *membership in a group*."[292] Relations of social capital, which ultimately rest on relations of mutual exchange, can be institutionalized, for example, by way of names signifying one's belonging to a certain family, tribe, or party. A person's social capital depends on the number of their relations and on the amount of cultural, economic, and social capital held by those in the person's network of relations. For this reason, people invest work, time, and economic capital to establish or retain relations and memberships in groups.[293]

Bourdieu's work in premodern Islamicate contexts include Naaman, *Literature*; Eychenne, *Liens*; Yarbrough, *Friends*.

288   Bourdieu, Kapital 183.
289   Bourdieu, Kapital 185.
290   Bourdieu, Kapital 185.
291   Bourdieu, Kapital 185–190.
292   Bourdieu, Kapital, 190–1.
293   Bourdieu, Kapital 191–3. See also Bourdieu, Kapital 194–5.

All three types of capital can be accumulated over time and are, in any given point in time, distributed in a specific pattern across the members of a given society.[294] Under certain circumstances and limitations, capital can be transmitted and one type of capital can be transformed into another.[295] Such a transformation, however, requires a certain investment, which is best measured in the working time expended on it.[296]

Patronage is one of the most important mechanisms through which the allocation and exchange of different forms of capital takes place in courtly contexts. Building on Asch's work, patronage can be defined, on one hand, as relations of exchange between influential persons (patrons) and less influential parties (clients), in which patrons protect and support their clients using the various forms of capital at their disposal, while clients assist patrons especially, but not only, in times of conflict. Such relations, which usually develop and exist over long periods of time, can be called "protective patronage" (*Protektionspatronage*). On the other hand, one can also understand patronage as isolated, possibly non-recurring acts through which an influential person (patron) transfers a capital asset to another, usually less influential person (client). Asch calls this second kind of patronage "benefit patronage" (*Benefizialpatronage*). In practice, both forms of patronage are often closely connected, with recurring acts of benefit patronage establishing and stabilizing relations of protective patronage.[297]

Usually, relations of patronage are informal; they are not based on contracts or other legal instruments.[298] They are particularly useful for patrons who command large amounts of capital—such as rulers—, but need the help of clients to legitimate their position, or those who lay claim to a high social position and rely on the assistance of clients to enforce it.[299]

In complex social configurations—for example, major court societies, which can develop into full-fledged "patronage markets"[300]—patronage often takes place indirectly through the assistance of persons who act as mediators between patrons and their (indirect) clients. Such patronage brokers can

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294   Bourdieu, Kapital 183.
295   Bourdieu, Kapital 185–6.
296   Bourdieu, Kapital 196–8.
297   Asch, *Hof* 289–90. I have slightly modified Asch's definitions to adjust them to Bourdieu's concept of capital and the needs of the present study.
298   Asch, *Hof* 290–1. See also Asch, *Hof* 295.
299   Asch, *Hof* 292–3.
300   Asch, *Hof* 18. On courts and patronage, see also, e.g., Asch, *Hof* 12, 294–5; Duindam, Observer 96–7; Asch, Introduction 16–7; Mączak, Household 319–21; Evans, Institution 488; Duindam, Royal Courts 9; Paravicini, Attraktion 276; Konrad, *Hof* 20–1.

appear as patrons in their own right, from the perspective of clients who are dependent on them for access to capital assets only the highest-raking patrons can bestow. Typically, a member of court society might, for example, rely on a higher-ranking patronage broker to present a request to the ruler.[301] Thus, indirect patronage and brokerage can contribute significantly to the development of complicated networks and hierarchies that connect members of a given court society to the ruler and each other.[302] Still, we should not underestimate the influence of a ruler's personality on the shape of the court, as patronage is only one, albeit an important way, for the ruler to exert influence on those around him.[303]

Arabic speakers of the middle period had at their disposal a refined terminology to describe different forms and aspects of patronage,[304] which often played an important role in their respective societies.[305] A client, called, inter alia, *mawlā* (associate), *tābiʿ* (follower), *ṣāniʿ* (protégé), or *ṣāḥib* (companion),[306] usually offered a *khidma* (service) to patrons.[307] *Khidma* was exchanged for what is typically called a *niʿma* (favor) of the patron,[308] whom the authors of our sources referred to as *mawlā* (master) or *muṣṭaniʿ* (commissioner).[309] Patronage brokers who could practice effective intercession

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301　Asch, *Hof* 293–4, 308. See also Asch, Introduction 17; Mączak, Household 320–1; Paravicini, Attraktion 276; van Steenbergen, *Order* 60; El Cheikh, Chamberlains 156; El Cheikh, Space 334–5; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 87; Konrad, *Hof* 21.

302　Konrad, Patterns 237. See also Winterling, Versuch 80.

303　Müller, *Fürstenhof* 5 (on the influence of rulers on their courts). See also Duindam, Observer 97–8; Griffiths, Wars 66; Evans, Institution 486.

304　The relevant vocabulary was not fixed across time, space, and social field. On its development with a focus on scholarly patronage, see Brentjes, Language. On the pertinent Persian terminology, see Flatt, *Courts* 100–1, 105.

305　The literature on patronage in premodern Islamicate societies is vast and cannot be summarized here. In addition to the classical study Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, esp. 72–93; see, e.g., Pfeiffer (ed.), *Politics*; Paul, *Herrschaft*; Bernards and Nawas (eds.), *Patronate*; Hartung, Enacting, esp. 299–307, 315; Sharlet, *Patronage*, esp. 150–69; Flatt, *Courts* 74–119. Fundamental studies on patronage in Mamluk society include Clifford, *State*; van Steenbergen, *Order*; Eychenne, *Liens*; Eychenne, Entité.

306　Van Steenbergen, *Order* 59; Naaman, *Literature* 17–8; Brentjes, Language 12. See also Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 83, 85, 89; Sievert, Family 98; Eychenne, *Liens* 42–4, 47.

307　Van Steenbergen, *Order* 62. See also Clifford, *State* 16, 47, 210; Brentjes, Language 15–8; Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 116–8; Hirschler, *Historiography* 19–20; Sievert, Family 97; Eychenne, *Liens* 42; Eychenne, Entité 280; Paul, *Herrschaft*, passim; Paul, History.

308　Van Steenbergen, *Order* 62. See also Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 73–4, 77; Clifford, *State* 16, 47, 62, 210; Sievert, Family 97; Eychenne, *Liens* 50; Paul, *Herrschaft* 231, 233–9, 246, 248–9, 255–8, 328, 375–424, 426–9.

309　Naaman, *Literature* 17; Brentjes, Language 12.

(*shafāʿa*) were known—at least in the Mamluk period—as having *maqbūl al-kalima*, a term van Steenbergen translates as "a guaranteed say."[310] The verb often denoting the practice of patronage was *iṣṭanaʿ* (to commission, to patronize).[311]

Favoritism is a phenomenon closely related to the patronage found in many court societies. Building on Asch's work, we can define a favorite as a person who enjoys, in the eyes of the ruler, a high level of personal favor, one that goes beyond the trust usually accorded to members of court society and is often the result of bonds of friendship. Favorites often have prerogatives in the courtly context that are not related to a clearly defined office. They are, for example, often the most important patronage brokers and sometimes establish patronage networks of their own. Typically, favorites have constant and direct access to rulers and can often control or curtail other people's rights of access.[312]

Favoritism is not specific to a particular period or region.[313] Rather, the favorite "can almost appear as a figure necessary for the system"[314] in any autocratic regime. Often, rulers elevate persons who had been outsiders or at least low-ranking members of court society to the position of favorites. Such people are almost totally dependent on the ruler to maintain their position and are thus particularly willing to fulfill their functions—including that of mediator between the ruler and the latter's court society—in ways that suite their benefactors' needs.[315] Favorites can be particularly useful in clandestine policies, especially when they perform actions that rulers cannot be directly involved in, if they want to maintain their dignity.[316] The downside to this system of favorites is its uncertainty; the same people who might profit from elevation

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310   Van Steenbergen, *Order* 68. On Mamluk patronage brokerage, see also Eychenne, *Liens* 54–5.

311   Naaman, *Literature* 17; Brentjes, Language 12; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 41, 82–3, 89.

312   Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 517–9; Asch, Lumine solis 24–5. See also Konrad, *Hof* 193; Paravicini, Fall 17; Asch, Lumine solis 35–6; Asch, Patronage, *passim*; Sievert, Favouritism 274. On favorites as patronage brokers, see also Asch, *Hof* 304–5; Asch, Introduction 20–4; Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 522; Duindam, History 98; Adamson, Making 19–20. On the concept of favor, see Winterling, Versuch 80–1; Althoff, Huld; Paravicini, Attraktion 276; Duindam, History 98; Paravicini, Fall 17; for Arabic terminology, see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 93; and for favoritism in Islamicate societies, see, e.g., Sievert, Favouritism.

313   Asch, Introduction 20; Paravicini, Fall 15–6. See also Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 516, 529–30.

314   Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 524.

315   Asch, Introduction 22; Adamson, Making 19–20; Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 520–1 (on the favorite's functions). See also Evans, Institution 485; Paravicini, Fall 18–9; Duindam, Royal Courts 22; Paravicini, Strukturen 4; Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 518, 528.

316   Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 520–1. See also Sievert, Favouritism 275.

to a status far beyond their usual position are also especially prone to lose the favor of rulers at one point or the other, especially if they become threats to their benefactors. In this case, their fall from grace can be particularly deep, dramatic, and often enough, deadly.[317]

The conceptualization of the court outlined in the present and the preceding sections is definitely not the only one possible. Yet, in combining multiple perspectives on what constitutes a court, it does have several distinct advantages: With its focus on persons and events, together with the spaces in which they take place, this conceptualization can serve as a powerful tool in our analysis of the main sources of the present study. These sources abound with references to social groups such as a ruler's *khāṣṣakiyya, muqarrabūn*, and *khawāṣṣ*. They also feature numerous accounts of *khidma*s, *mawkib*s, or *simāṭ*s that these persons staged, or in which they participated, in the sultan's *qalʿa*. Yet, as noted, the sources do not include an umbrella term denoting what these terms have in common. The conceptualization of the court outlined here can offer interpretative instruments with which we can study precisely the interconnections and underlying dynamics that exist between the persons, spaces, and social phenomena these Arabic terms point to. It thus promises to shed light on aspects that would go unnoticed in studies lacking appropriate theoretical frameworks and to enhance the analytical potential of the philological and historical-critical approach pursued in the study at hand.[318]

Moreover, the conceptualization used here is abstract and versatile enough to be applied to many pre- and early modern societies, irrespective of cultural background.[319] Basically, the only elements necessary are the presence of a ruler in a given space, a group of persons socially connected to the ruler, and the performance of events centered on the ruler. Whether these elements are found in a European, Near Eastern, East Asian, American, or any other society is, in principle, irrelevant and does not diminish the analytical value of the conceptualization.[320] The period is also not relevant; the respective subject

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317   Paravicini, Fall 14, 20; Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 523–4. See also Winterling, Versuch 81; Asch, Schlußbetrachtung 516–7.

318   My understanding of the historical-critical approach is influenced by the methodology of biblical studies as outlined, e.g., in Ehrman, *Testament* 201–7; Utzschneider and Nitsche, *Arbeitsbuch*; and by the world philology/new philology approach, on which see, e.g., Dayeh, Potential.

319   Cf. Konrad, Patterns 236, on the "high degree of abstraction" of the conceptualizations outlined; Schlögl, Kommunikation 16–7, on the theoretical versatility of the concept of (symbolic) communication; and Konrad, Überlegungen 1061, on the aspect of transcultural applicability.

320   Sievert, Favouritism 273, speaks of courts as "a central feature of monarchic polities glob-

of the study may date to premodern or early modern times.[321] Thus, far from being Eurocentric, the conceptualization of the court outlined here can be a helpful instrument with which to compare societies across cultural, historical, religious, and linguistic borders.[322]

With regard to Islamicate courts, the present study builds on several current trajectories of research on rulership and political culture in Arabic-, Turkic-, and Persian-speaking societies. Aspects of symbolic communication in pre- and early modern courtly contexts have begun to receive increased attention in recent years, especially in the case of ʿAbbasid,[323] Fatimid,[324] Seljuq,[325] Ottoman,[326] and Islamicate Indian[327] courts. Scholars build on insights and research results developed mainly in European contexts and modify them as necessary to use as analytical tools for the study of non-European societies.[328] Relying on theories of symbolic communication seems particularly promising in this context, as "it is more or less self-evident that eastern elites […] resorted to ritual and symbolic forms of communication just as much as their western peers did,"[329] as Alexander Beihammer points out. The same author acknowledges that much work remains to be done in this field, particularly with regard to the sub-topic of political rituals: "[T]he investigation of rituals in Byzantine and Muslim political cultures is still a far cry from the level western medieval

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ally." On "court" as a transcultural concept, see also Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 17–8; Jacobs and Rollinger, Bemerkungen 2–3; Duindam, Royal Courts 1–2; Duindam, Observer 91; Duindam, History 103–4; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 2; Conermann, Hof 13–4.

321 On "court" as a useful concept for the study of various periods of human history, see Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit, esp. 13, 17–8, 24–5; Jacobs and Rollinger, Bemerkungen 2–3, 10; Duindam, Royal Courts 1–2; Duindam, Observer 91; Duindam, History 103; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 2.

322 On the risk of Eurocentrism in court studies, see Fuess and Hartung, Introduction 2–3; and for a recent attempt at cross-cultural comparison which, however, ignores the question of what constitutes a court and hence fails to provide an appropriate theoretical framework, see England, *Empires*.

323 See, e.g., El Cheikh, Institutionalisation, esp. 368–9; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts, esp. 528, 530; El Cheikh, Prince, esp. 153–4; El Cheikh, Prince 199.

324 Sanders, *Ritual*; Oesterle, *Kalifat*.

325 See., e.g., Hillenbrand, Aspects, esp. 25.

326 See., e.g., Necipoğlu, *Architecture*, esp. 68–9; Woodhead, Perspectives, esp. 168–70; Yelçe, Evaluating.

327 See., e.g., Keshani, Theatres, esp. 447–9, 457, 463, 466.

328 See especially the work of El Cheikh, Keshani, and Sanders mentioned in the previous footnotes. On the need for modification and adjustment, see Beihammer, Approaches 15; Konrad, Patterns 236; Konrad, Überlegungen 1056; Sanders, *Ritual* 6.

329 Beihammer, Approaches 14–5. See also van Steenbergen, Ritual 227.

studies have reached in their respective field. [...] Research on political rituals in the areas in question [...] is still in its infancy."[330]

In Mamluk studies, more than twenty years ago Winslow W. Clifford called upon his fellow historians to apply "middle range theories of social interaction, culture, [and] ideology"[331] to their subjects of study and focus, inter alia, on what he calls "gestural communication" and the "symbols"[332] related to it. He thereby reiterated Ira M. Lapidus's even earlier demand that historians should study "the concepts and values that bear on the ordering of social relationships, [and] the [...] symbols of social order."[333] More recently, Stephen R. Humphreys has followed these authors' line of reasoning and drawn the attention of scholars working on Mamluk politics to "symbolic action, cultural representation, [and] the encoding of ideology in myth and ritual" and argued that one should "remember that symbols, myths, and rituals are not autonomous entities operating inside some separate universe; they reflect or embody real acts which have grave material consequences for real people."[334] Jo van Steenbergen's recent work shares this perspective and underlines the need for a semiotic[335] approach to Mamluk culture and literature that pays special attention to "discursive modes of elite communication [that are] semiotically linked to—even defined by issues of social identity, elite integration, and their performance."[336] Yet, despite these calls to take symbols, rituals, and representation seriously, historians of the Mamluk Sultanate have only very rarely engaged in theoretically well-grounded analyses of this dimension of Mamluk political life. As van Steenbergen recently noted: "[T]he ritual aspect of Mamluk political culture remains poorly understood."[337]

By contrast, conceptualizing the court as a social group particularly close to the ruler is an approach utilized in several recent publications on premodern Islamicate societies. In her articles on the 'Abbasid court, El Cheikh notes

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330   Beihammer, Approaches 15. See also Sanders, *Ritual* 5.

331   Clifford, Ubi Sumus 46.

332   Clifford, Ubi Sumus 61 (both quotations).

333   Lapidus, *Cities* xv.

334   Humphreys, Politics 221 (both quotations).

335   While sympathetic to the idea of a semiotic approach, the present study does not employ this term, as it might be mistaken as an indication that historians applying this approach study only signs, and not their social impact and use in processes of communication.

336   Van Steenbergen, Discourse 2. See also van Steenbergen, Discourse 24, 28; van Steenbergen, Ritual, esp. 227, 231–2.

337   Van Steenbergen, Ritual 227. For studies shedding some light on this topic, see Frenkel, Projection, esp. 39–40; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo*, esp. 25–33; Petry, Robing; van Steenbergen, Ritual; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme; Levanoni, Food; Broadbridge, Conventions.

that "the real criterion for membership of the court was access to the caliph. [...] The court was not an institution in any formal sense but rather a gathering of people, often fluid in composition and constantly changing."[338] Studies on other Islamicate courts take a similar view: Naaman defines the court as "an elite social configuration created by a potentate,"[339] while Chejne notes that in the Islamicate middle period, "[t]he court of a ruler comprised—in addition to regular appointees such as viziers, secretaries, chamberlains, and others—a goodly number of people with diversified talents."[340] By combining such observations on the social structure of courts with perspectives focusing on their performative and spatial aspects, the present study thus takes up the findings of earlier publications and seeks to integrate them into a more holistic analytical framework.

1.2.5 *The* majlis *as an Aspect of Islamicate Court Culture*

Before exploring the analytical potential of the conceptualization outlined above, we need to address the Arabic term *majlis*, given its importance for the performative, social, and spatial dimensions of al-Ghawrī's court examined in the study at hand.

Grammatically speaking, *majlis* (pl. *majālis*) is a noun of place of the root *j-l-s* with the basic meanings "to sit up" or "to sit up straight."[341] Hence, it can be readily translated as "a place where one sits."[342] In this spatial sense it is used, for example, in Islamicate palace architecture, where it denotes a room or hall in which a ruler or other person of influence sits while receiving guests.[343] By extension, *majlis* can also refer to a "meeting place" in general as well as a "session" in the broadest sense of this English word.[344] Moreover, it is also used

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338 El Cheikh, Space 332–3, 335. See also El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 520, 523–4; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 81, 85–6; El Cheikh, Prince 203; El Cheikh, Space 325–6.

339 Naaman, *Literature* 2.

340 Chejne, Boon-Companion 327. For other studies understanding Islamicate courts as social entities, see, e.g., Bacharach, Complexes 125; Marmer, *Culture* 2–3; Murphey, *Exploring* 209.

341 Makdisi, *Colleges* 11.

342 Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299. See also Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031; Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 444.

343 Grabar, *Ceremonial* 27, 126, 139, 154–5, 226; Halm, Oath 101, 105, 107; Halm, *Learning* 48; Northedge, Interpretation 146–7, 149. See also Barceló, Caliph 433–5, 438–41; Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031; Brookshaw, Palaces 201–2; Canard, Cérémonial 408–9, 413; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 360; El Cheikh, Space 322; Grabar, Palaces 72; Milwright, Fixtures 105; Pfeifer, Encounter 221; Rabbat, *Citadel* 115–6, 171; Sanders, *Ritual* 33; Sourdel, Cérémonial 124, 128; Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 118–21, 123, 126–32, 189.

344 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031; Günther, Islamic Education 641. See also Kraemer, *Humanism* 55–6; Makdisi, *Colleges* 10–1; Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 444; Pfeifer, Encounter 221.

in ceremonial language as a title for a high-ranking person, in which case, it can best be translated as "Excellency."[345] In general, *majlis* often appears as the first word of a genitive construction in which the second word defines it more closely.[346]

Depending on its context, the word *majlis* covers a very broad spectrum of meanings that can be clarified best through a systematic categorization of the contexts in which it is used. Such a categorization also helps us to determine its various context-dependent translations into English. The following discussion focuses on the usage of the term *majlis* in reference to social institutions. The categories outlined should be understood as ideal types in the Weberian sense and might not be entirely suitable to describe every characteristic of a given *majlis*.[347] Moreover, a specific historical *majlis* may fall between two or more different categories.[348]

One of the spheres in which the term *majlis* figures most prominently is that of education and the transmission of knowledge.[349] Here, the breadth of its semantic field becomes clear again: As an educational term, *majlis* can denote a place where a class is taught, the class itself, a single session of a class, its participants, its contents, or even the published form of its contents.[350] While the term *majlis al-ʿilm* (lit. "session of knowledge") has been used to describe an educational or academic session in general,[351] more specific terms reflect the topics of a particular *majlis*. Thus, *majlis al-ḥadīth* signifies, for example, that a *majlis* is dedicated to the study and transmission of prophetic traditions,[352]

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345   Cf. Dozy, *Supplément* i, 208. See also al-Waqqād, Amīr 219–20; Lane, *Lexicon* ii, 444; Popper, *Notes* ii, 22; Bosworth, Laḳab 627–8; Dekkiche, Diplomatics 204–5; Muslu, *Ottomans* 162–3, 191; al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 101; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* 359–65 and index; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 497–8; vii, 143–4, 153; xi, 75, 77–85 and index.

346   Ahmed, *Education* 55; Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031.

347   For Max Weber's concept of ideal types, see, e.g., Weber, *Economy* i, 6, 9, 19–22. On the *majlis* as an important social institution, see also Griffith, Monk 61.

348   See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 303, 311, 314–5; Berkey, *Preaching* 16.

349   See, in general, Ahmed, *Education* 55–85; Günther, Islamic Education 641; Günther, Bildung 217; Günther, Education, general; Makdisi, *Colleges* 10–2; Brentjes, *Teaching* 149–51.

350   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1033; Makdisi, *Colleges* 10–2. See also Ahmed, *Education* 55; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299; Berkey, *Transmission* 41; Dozy, *Supplément* i 208; Makdisi, *Humanism* 60; Schoeler, *Genesis* 9, 41, 90.

351   Makdisi, *Colleges* 10. See also Berkey, Tradition 60.

352   Ahmed, *Education* 55–8; Makdisi, *Colleges* 10. See also al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 57–96; Ahmed, *Education* 73–83; Scheiner, Class 185; Scheiner, Teachers 200. For late Mamluk examples of this usage of the term, see, e.g., Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 248, 369, 373; ii, 10, 17.

whereas *majlis al-naḥw* points to a class focusing on grammar.[353] Poets and other people interested in poetry meet in *majālis al-shuʿarāʾ*,[354] while *majālis al-tadrīs* are mostly classes on Islamic law.[355] Educational *majālis* often took place in mosques, *madrasa*s, or a scholar's home.[356]

The *majlis al-munāẓara* (or *mujādala*) was an important type of educational *majlis* in which disputations could take place, either within a given religious group, or across confessional and religious borders.[357] Their primary aim was not the transmission of knowledge, but the intellectual contest between two or more participants.[358] Often, *majālis al-munāẓara* were organized by high-ranking persons, who often also served as arbiters.[359] Such *majālis* were also convened by scholars or took place spontaneously.[360] Early on, *majālis al-munāẓara* were especially favored by theologians, but later also took root in other academic disciplines, such as jurisprudence and linguistics.[361] Its competitive character often led to ethical problems which Muslim authors, including Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), addressed in detail.[362] The sometimes morally questionable features of the *majlis al-munāẓara* contributed to the development of a distinct type of literature on the rules of correct behavior in a *majlis al-munāẓara* and its theoretical underpinnings.[363] Moreover,

353 Ahmed, *Education* 55, 58–9. See also Makdisi, *Humanism* 61. For accounts of such *majālis*, see, e.g., al-Zajjājī, *Majālis al-ʿulamāʾ*.

354 Ahmed, *Education* 83–4; Makdisi, *Colleges* 11. See also Ahsan, *Life* 285; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat* 22–3; Gruendler, *Praise Poetry* 49.

355 Makdisi, *Colleges* 12. But see also Ahmed, *Education* 58–9.

356 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1033; Günther, Islamic Education 641. See also Ali, *Salons* 15; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299; Berkey, *Transmission* 7; Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 25; Kraemer, *Humanism* 56–7; Makdisi, *Colleges* 12; Makdisi, *Humanism* 62–4; Talmon, Tawaddud 120; Scheiner and Janos, Baghdād 34–5.

357 Makdisi, *Colleges* 11; Talmon, Tawaddud 121. See also Brookshaw, Palaces 199.

358 Ahmed, *Education* 59, 63. See also van Ess, Disputationspraxis 23, 25.

359 Ahmed, *Education* 59–60. See also van Ess, Disputationspraxis 34, 48–9; Kraemer, *Humanism* 58; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 260; Makdisi, *Colleges* 133; Talmon, Tawaddud 121–2; von Grunebaum, Aspects 293.

360 Ahmed, *Education* 61–5.

361 Ahmed, *Education* 59. See also Ahmed, *Education* 65–7; Stroumsa, Role 67; Wagner, Munāẓara 565; Watt, *Free Will* 62, 104; Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 118; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 170. For a dissenting opinion, see Young, *Forge*, esp. 3, 8, 12–3, 32–43.

362 Ahmed, *Education* 67. See also Ahmed, *Education* 67–72; van Ess, Disputationspraxis 35–6; Griffel, *Theology* 44; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ* i, 38–48.

363 Ahmed, *Education* 71. On the procedure and theory of *majālis al-munāẓara*, see, e.g., van Ess, Disputationspraxis, esp. 25–7, 31–48, 59–60; Griffith, Monk 13, 62; al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 169–84; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 260; Miller, Dispute; Belhaj, *Argumentation*; Dziri, *Scholastik*; Stroumsa, Role; Wagner, Munāẓara 565–6. On Mamluk *majālis al-munāẓara*, see ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 240–6; Belhaj, Disputation.

the *majlis al-munāẓara*, with its typical sequence of questions and answers or statements and replies, had a profound influence on the dialectic organization of multiple fields of Islamicate learning.[364]

In the religious sphere, the word *majlis* likewise has a variety of meanings. In Sunni Islam, preaching sessions were known as *majālis al-waʿẓ*.[365] Sessions in which Sufis transmitted and practiced their religious teachings, often with recourse to music, were also called *majālis*,[366] as were the ritual mourning sessions of Indian Shiʿis.[367]

The *majlis al-ḥikma* (lit. "session of wisdom") was a type of *majlis* specific to Ismaʿili communities. This kind of *majālis* blossomed during the reign of the Fatimids in Egypt. Prepared by the Fatimid chief propagandist (*dāʿī l-duʿāt*), these regular sessions educated their participants in Ismaʿili spiritual teachings. They were held separately for different groups of participants, and segregated by gender, social position, and level of religious knowledge. Records of their proceedings, also known by the name of *majālis*, are extant and rank among the most important sources for the reconstruction of premodern Ismaʿili religious doctrine.[368]

Majlis al-ḥukm (lit. "session of judgment") is a term common in sources describing legal procedures to refer to *qāḍī* tribunals, as well as the locations where they took place, thereby demonstrating the importance of the word *majlis* in the juridical sphere.[369] The same applies to the term *majlis al-maẓālim*.[370] Formal legal opinions (sg. *fatwā*) were issued in *majālis al-fatwā*. The latter could also feature legal instruction and were then known as *majālis al-fatwā wa-l-tadrīs*.[371]

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364   Ahmed, *Education* 70–1; van Ess, Disputationspraxis 25. See also Daiber, Masāʾil wa-Adjwiba 636–8; Frank, *Kalām* and Philosophy 72; Griffith, Monk 63; Kraemer, *Humanism* 56–7; Kraemer, *Philosophy* 53; Wagner, Munāẓara 566.

365   Makdisi, *Colleges* 11, 217–8. See also al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 157–68; Makdisi, *Humanism* 188–9; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 96; Pedersen, Preacher 240, 250; Swartz, Rules; Talmon-Heller, *Piety* 115–48.

366   Berkey, *Preaching* 27; Jackson, Khair 34; Nizami, Malfūẓāt 577; Manz, *Power* 198–9, 202, 205–6, 235.

367   Rahman, Madjlis 1033.

368   Madelung, Madjlis 1033. See also Halm, Oath 98–111; Halm, *Learning, passim*; Oesterle, Missionaries 66; see section 3.1.5 below.

369   Makdisi, *Colleges* 11. See also Shoshan, *Damascus* 78, 126.

370   ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 223–32. See also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1., 666.

371   Makdisi, *Colleges* 11–2. See also Ahmed, *Education* 85; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 207–17. On the term *majlis* in the legal sphere, see also ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 196–206, 218–22. For examples of *majlis* in the late Mamluk legal sphere, see, e.g., Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1996; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 131, 151, 212, 252; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 100,

The use of the word *majlis* is also attested in the field of politics, where the council of leading notables of a tribe was known by this term already in pre-Islamic times. It later served to denote different types of councils and assemblies in the governmental system of various Islamicate polities, including modern-day parliaments.[372] In the Mamluk Sultanate, a *majlis* of the leading senior *amīr*s and other high-ranking officials, known as the *majlis al-mashūra* or *mashūrat al-umarāʾ* (lit. "council of *amīr*s") held considerable influence over the ruler and often had a decisive say in the succession to the throne.[373] The designation of *amīr majlis*, one of the highest offices of the late Mamluk governing apparatus, goes back to this council.[374] Moreover, together with terms such as *julūs* or *khidma*, the word *majlis* could also denote an official audience in which a ruler received visitors or passed judgments.[375]

Another, notably different type of *majālis* had a social and intellectual character and served as an important venue of communication for court societies. Typically, these *majālis* can be called "courtly" in the sense outlined above, as they were among the social events that constituted courts, but cannot simply be equated with courts themselves. In premodern sources, they were often known as *majālis al-uns* (lit. "sessions of sociability"),[376] a term that is explained by Reinhart Dozy as a "réunion de grandes seigneuries et d' hommes de lettres, où l' on s' entretient de littérature en buvant."[377] Organized by rulers and other high-ranking figures, these *majālis* often took place in the residences of those convening them[378] and were, as Erez Naaman put it, "at the core of the court."[379] In contrast to the closely related institution of the more informal

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115, 120–1, 158, 286, 300–1, 344–5; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 342; ii, 6; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 191.

372 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299.

373 Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 391. See also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 667, 731–4; Irwin, Factions 229, 231–2; Levanoni, Conception 374, 382–4; al-Waqqād, Amīr 238; Levanoni, *Point* 194–5; and for details on Mamluk political *majālis*, see ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā*, esp. 30–193.

374 Ayalon, Amīr madjlis 445; Irwin, Factions 232; Schultz, Amīr majlis. See also Dozy, *Supplément* i, 208; Popper, *Notes* i, 92; and on the office in detail, see al-Waqqād, Amīr.

375 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031. See also section 1.2.1 above. For examples of *majlis* in the late Mamluk political sphere, see, e.g., Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 138–139, 142, 150, 155, 161, 163–4, 174–5; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 380; 399, 406, 439, 454; iv, 96, 103, 124, 139, 141, 157, 176, 180–1, 212, 242, 308, 376, 407, 445, 455, 458, 471, 479, 484; v, 83, 86, 104–5, 118, 126, 150; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 357; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 197.

376 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1032. See also Brookshaw, Palaces 199; Naaman, *Literature* 18.

377 Dozy, *Supplément* i, 40.

378 Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031–2. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299–301; Kraemer, *Humanism* 55, 58; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 260; Shalaby, *History* 35–6; Stroumsa, Role 66; and for a Mamluk *majlis al-uns* Guo, Cross-Gender, esp. 165.

379 Naamen, *Literature* 80.

mujālasa, whose participants were of roughly equal social standing,[380] courtly *majālis* followed a certain protocol and etiquette,[381] which governed, inter alia, the seating arrangement of their attendees, who typically varied considerably in rank.[382]

Courtly *majālis* of the Islamicate middle period were an important platform for amusing discussions about scholarly and literary topics and a place to present and consider panegyric texts.[383] Moreover, their participants often enjoyed games, food, wine, and music.[384] A ruler's professional boon companions or *nudamāʾ* (sg. *nadīm*) played central roles during such *majālis*,[385] as is underscored by the saying that five *nudamāʾ* make up a *majlis*, as quoted by the Mamluk author al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333).[386] Often, the participants in such *majālis* were called *julasāʾ* (sg. *jalīs*), a word that literally means "one with whom one sits together" or "table companion."[387] As courtly events of great communicative significance, *majālis al-uns* gave rulers excellent opportunities to show themselves as refined, sophisticated, and generous patrons of learning and the arts vis-à-vis key members of their court societies, thus legitimating their elevated position. Hence, *majālis al-uns* were popular at courts across the Islamicate world.[388]

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380   Ali, *Salons* 16–8; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 299. For a detailed discussion of *mujālasa*, see Ali, *Salons*. *Maqāma* as a related term denotes "a more haphazard meeting than the formally organized *majlis*," Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 65.

381   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031. See also Ali, *Salons* 16–8; Gardet, Société 264; Nielson, Visibility 86; Flatt, *Courts* 109. On relevant aspects of Umayyad, ʿAbbasid, and Fatimid ceremonial, see Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031–2; al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 41–7; Mason, *Statesmen* 45–51; Grabar, *Ceremonial* 65–72. On proper behavior in a *majlis*, see, e.g., al-Qurṭubī, *Bahjat al-majālis* i, 29–53; Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Mevâʿidüʾn-nefāis*; Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Gentleman*.

382   Behzadi, Intellektuelle 300. See also Brookshaw, Palaces 200; al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 43; El Cheikh, Prince 210.

383   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031–2. See also Chejne, Boon-Companion 333; Kraemer, *Humanism* viii; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 260; Makdisi, *Humanism* 61–2; Stroumsa, Role 66; Talmon, Tawaddud 123; von Grunebaum, Aspects 292.

384   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1032; Brookshaw, Palaces 199–200. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 300; Chejne, Boon-Companion 330; al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 48–54; Robinson, Paradise 150–1; Subtelny, Scenes 144; Talmon, Tawaddud 123; von Grunebaum, Aspects 293.

385   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1032. See also Ali, Boon Companion; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 309; Behzadi, Art 167; Chejne, Boon-Companion; El Cheikh, Prince 209; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 524–6; Meisami, *Court Poetry* 6–8; Osti, Culture 192, 195, 198, 203–8; Osti, Remuneration; Robinson, Paradise 150; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 96; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 77; Sadan, Nadīm; Yıldız, Sultan 95–105; von Grunebaum, Aspects 292–3; Irwin, Literature 9, 14.

386   Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab* iv, 125.

387   Wehr, *Dictionary* 131.

388   Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1031–2. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 301; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 260.

A series of particularly well known, entertaining and at the same time edifying *majālis* took place at the courts of the Buyid dynasty. Thanks to the works of writers such as Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. ca. 414/1023), we can reconstruct their most important features. Many of these *majālis* were organized by Buyid rulers interested in improving their reputation as patrons of the arts, or by viziers, who were often full-fledged scholars and men of letters in their own right. Among those convened at the palaces of these influential men, we find professional boon companions, poets, secretaries, and scholars, both Muslims and people of other creeds. Erudition and eloquence were the most important qualifications demanded from and appreciated by those taking part in this kind of *majālis*. The vast array of topics discussed at these sessions included questions of theology and philosophy, but also Arabic literature, amusing anecdotes, and current issues of social life.[389]

Although Buyid and ʿAbbasid[390] courtly *majālis* have received the largest share of scholarly attention so far, we know that similar events also took place at the courts of later Muslim rulers, such as, for example, the Seljuqs of Rūm,[391] the Ayyubids,[392] the Özbeks,[393] the Timurids,[394] the Mamluks,[395] the Ottomans,[396] the Muslim dynasties of the Deccan,[397] and the Mughals.[398] In all of these cases, the question arises of how the term *majlis* should be trans-

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389   Behzadi, Intellektuelle 304–11. On Buyid *majālis*, see also Behzadi, Art; Gardet, Société 260–4, 267–9; Kraemer, *Humanism*; Shalaby, *History* 39; Naaman, *Literature* 3, 5, 60–1, 64, 77, 80–92, 259; Orfali, *Art* 186–7.

390   On Abbasid and Buyid courtly *majālis*, see, e.g., al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 41–54; Bosworth et al., Madj̲lis 1032; Chejne, Boon-Companion 330, 332–3, 335; El Cheikh, Conversation; El Cheikh, Court and Courtiers 82, 84; El Cheikh, Prince 209–10, 215; El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 524; Gruendler, *Praise Poetry* 5–6, 48–9; Kilpatrick, Selection 338–9; Makdisi, *Humanism* 61–2; Osti, Culture 192–3, 196–7; Osti, Remuneration 98, 103; Robinson, Paradise 151; Robinson, *Culture*; Talmon, Tawaddud 120; von Grunebaum, Aspects 292–3; Mason, *Statesmen* 43–52; England, *Empires* 42–5.

391   Yıldız, Sultan 100–2.

392   Brentjes, Princes 340–1; Rabbat, History 48.

393   Haarmann, Khundj̲ī 54; Subtelny, Art 139–46.

394   Subtelny, Scenes 143–5. See also Manz, *Power* 30, 197, 215.

395   Flemming, Activities 250; Haarmann, Arabic 97–8; Irwin, Literature 10, 27–8. See also Larkin, Poetry 221; Irwin, History 168.

396   Ertuğ, Entertaining; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 62. See also Berger, Interpretations 695; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat* 74, 127, 184; Sievert, Favouritism 282; Sievert, Eavesdropping 160–1, 165, 182–5. For territories that had been ruled by the Mamluks, see Hanna, Life 197, 201–2; Hanna, *Books* 72–6, 140–1, 168; Pfeifer, Encounter.

397   Flatt, *Courts* 40–1, 109–19, 157–8, 161.

398   Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī; Kollatz, Creation, esp. 234; Kollatz, *Inspiration, passim*; Kollatz, Audience 122, 124–5.

lated into European languages. While the word is rendered into English in a variety of ways depending on the context, the two most common translations are "soiree"[399] and "salon,"[400] with the latter often more closely defined by the adjective "literary."[401] Obviously, all of these terms have their roots in European cultural history. Their use thus carries the risk of imposing European (that is, culturally alien) concepts on a social institution of the Islamicate world, thereby supporting a Eurocentric understanding of Islamicate history. Nevertheless, a translation of the Arabic term *majlis* seems necessary—not only for practical reasons, but also "to make the unknown familiar"[402] and thus understandable. In translating such a multifaceted term as *majlis*, it is important to emphasize that, apparently, no English word communicates the broad array of its meanings and implications. Yet, the methodically controlled and self-reflexive development of a translation of this term is clearly preferable to the alternative of leaving it untranslated. Using only the Arabic word would open the door to conscious or unconscious ad hoc translations, at least in the minds of readers who are not native Arabic speakers. Furthermore, such ad hoc translations might fail to convey the meaning of such an ambiguous term or might lead to misunderstandings.[403]

The term "salon" is particularly well-suited to render both the explicit meaning and at least some of the connotations of the term *majlis* into English, according to Lale Behzadi. In European cultural history, mostly from the eighteenth to twentieth century CE, the word "salon" generally denoted regular semi-secluded social gatherings that took place in the quarters of both aristocrats and commoners of high standing. These typically female-led meetings, which were informal but still required a certain etiquette, gave room to discussions about politics, literature, scholarship, and daily affairs, and were enjoyed with food, beverages, games, music, dramatic performances, self-presentation, and

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399   E.g., Behzadi, Art 167, 173–4, 176; D'hulster, Sitting 252; Irwin, *Night* 441; Kraemer, *Humanism* 20, 54, 202, 216, 218, 280; Kraemer, *Philosophy* 22; Robinson, Paradise 147, 150; Robinson, Memory 25; Subtelny, Art 140; Subtelny, Scenes 144. For the translation, "matinee," see Imhof, Traditio 6; Ertuğ, Entertaining 129.

400   E.g., Behzadi, Art 167–8; de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire* i, 316; Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1032; von Grunebaum, Aspects 292; Meisami, *Court Poetry* 22; Saba, *Harmonizing* 41. See also Cohen and Somekh, Interreligious Majālis 128; Mason, *Statesmen* 44; Guo, Cross-Gender 165; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 155.

401   E.g., Bosworth et al., Madjlis 1033; Irwin, Literature 27; Kraemer, *Humanism* 57; Makdisi, *Humanism* 60; Pfeifer, Encounter 220; Shalaby, *History* 32; Stroumsa, Role 66; Talib, *Epigram* 89; Saba, *Harmonizing* 119. See also Ali, *Salons* 3 and *passim*.

402   Behzadi, Intellektuelle 317.

403   See also Heinrichs, Einführung 17–8; and more broadly, see Juneja and Pernau, Lost 112–5.

networking. Far from uniform, the attendees of European salons included persons from all walks of life and genders.[404] In some way reflecting the diversity of these participants, the "'salon' [itself] seems to elude assignment to particular historical periods as well as a localization in terms of cultural geography."[405] Indeed, the fact that the concept "salon" does not lend itself easily to any kind of geographical, historical, or social localization seems to be one of its fundamental characteristics.[406]

Although the salon was a product of the social and cultural history of early modern and modern Europe in general and early modern Italy in particular,[407] the existence of "structurally similar and in their functions partially comparable formations from antiquity or from extra-European, e.g., Japanese, cultural spheres"[408] has not been doubted. One of these structurally similar and functionally comparable social institutions was the Islamicate courtly *majlis*, as Behzadi showed. Both the Islamicate *majlis* and the European salon served the representational interests of rulers and high-standing patrons, and were also important events for members of the cultural and intellectual elite. Both offered room for erudite and entertaining discussions in which literature and poetry played a prominent role. Moreover, they provided people who did not belong to high society with an opportunity to join discussions with the elite, to profit from intellectual exchange, and to prove themselves eloquent and quick-witted dialogue partners. Characterized by a certain tension between differences in social status and equality in debate, they contributed to the development of a "semi-public" sphere of communication.[409] In addition to these points raised by Behzadi, we may add that, like the Arabic word *majlis*, the French "salon" was originally a spatial term that denoted a room or a hall in which receptions took place. It only later adopted a broader array of meanings in various European languages and was used to designate exhibitions, semi-

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404   Behzadi, Intellektuelle 291–2; Seibert, *Salon* 3–6. On European salons, see, e.g., von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons*; Bung, *Spiele*; Beasley, *Creation*; Glotz and Maire, *Salons*; Gougy-François, *Salons*; Köhler, *Salonkultur*; Lukoschik, Konstanten 7–15; Schmid, *Salons*; Wilhelmy, *Salon*; Simanowski, Turk, and Schmidt (eds.), *Europa*; Schultz (ed.), *Salons*.

405   Seibert, *Salon* 3. I owe this quotation to Behzadi, Intellektuelle 292.

406   On the problems of defining European "salons," cf. Seibert, *Salon* 3–9. See also von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons* 16–9.

407   Seibert, *Salon* 3. See also von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons* 21–36.

408   Seibert, *Salon* 3. For an application of "salon" to premodern East Asia, see Jansen, *Öffentlichkeit*.

409   Behzadi, Intellektuelle 316–9. On their "semi-publicness," see also Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 118–21, 126, 189, 421–2; on power asymmetries, see Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 61, 65, 67–8; and on parallels between European salons and Islamicate *majālis* noted by von Grunebaum more than fifty years ago, see von Grunebaum, Aspects 299.

secluded sociable meetings, scholarly gatherings, and political assemblies, as well as specific types of literary writing.[410] Thus, its semantic field not only (roughly) matches that of the term *majlis* in scope, but also considerably overlaps with it.

In light of these similarities and parallels, "salon" is an adequate translation of the Arabic term *majlis* when the latter is used with reference to the courtly cultural sphere.[411] As is discussed in fuller detail below, it is thus also an appropriate designation for those *majālis* that took place during the very last years of the Mamluk period under the patronage of sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.[412]

410   Lukoschik, Konstanten 9–11. On the history of the term "salon," see also Bung, *Spiele* 25–71; von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons* 14–5; Seibert, *Salon* 8–24; Wilhelmy, *Salon* 16–24.

411   On the relationship between European salons and courts, see, e.g., von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons* 13–4, 18–9. On *muḥāḍara*s as a type of meetings sometimes likened to European salons, but lacking a courtly context, see Sadan, Brewer 4; Sadan, Nadīm 851; Kilpatrick, Genre 36.

412   On the term "salon" and al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see section 4.3 below.

Historical Context and State of Research

2.1 Historical Context: The Standard Narrative

2.1.1 *The Source of the Standard Narrative: Ibn Iyās*

Unlike other periods of Mamluk history, the very end of this era is known for a dearth of narrative historiographical sources. Only one comprehensive chronicle includes detailed information on the events taking place in the Egyptian heartlands of the sultanate during its last decades, namely, Ibn Iyās' *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* (The choicest blooms concerning the incidence of dooms).[1]

We know comparatively little about Ibn Iyās' biography and must rely on his own writings for information about his life and personality. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Barakāt Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Iyās al-Ḥanafī was born in 852/1448 into a family of Circassian origin. His great-grandfather Azdamur (d. 771/1370) had been a *mamlūk* and served in several high-ranking offices, including that of chief armorer (*amīr silāḥ*) and as governor of Tripoli, Safed, and Aleppo. Azdamur's daughter—Ibn Iyās' grandmother—married a *mamlūk* named Iyās al-Fakhrī (d. ca. 830/1427) who held the middle-rank position of deputy chancellor (*dawādār thānī*). Iyās al-Fakhrī's son Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 908/1502)—the father of our historian—was interested in literature and maintained close connections with members of the military elite of his time. His only surviving daughter—Ibn Iyās' sister—was married to a *mamlūk* by the name of Qurqmās who became a junior officer in the administration of the sultan's stables. Yūsuf, Ibn Iyās' only brother who reached maturity, served as warden in the Mamluk armory.[2]

Thus, through his family Ibn Iyās was closely connected to the military and administrative apparatus of the sultanate. He, however, opted for a schol-

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1 Brinner, Ibn Iyās 812; Irwin, Thinking 38. Translation of the title quoted from al-Musawi, Prose 121. On the importance of the work and the lack of alternatives, see also Muṣṭafā, Fātiḥa, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 9; Busool, Empire 94; Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 88; Holt, Ottoman Egypt 4–5: Winter, Attitudes 198–9; Petry, *Twilight* 9; Petry, *Protectors* 7; Tadmīrī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 48–49; Winter, Occupation 490–1; Haarmann, Review of *Twilight* 636; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 266–7. For a discussion of Ibn Iyās and his chronicle that builds on the following, see also Mauder, Barbier.

2 Brinner, Ibn Iyās 812; Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 13–6. See also Busool, Empire 95–6; Salmon (trans.), *Conquest* vii–viii; Petry, *Twilight* 9; Petry, *Protectors* 7; Vollers, Chronique 547.

arly career. Among his teachers, we find the famous polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) and the historian and legal scholar ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-Malaṭī (d. 920/1514). As far as we know, Ibn Iyās never held a teaching post or any other paid position, but relied for his livelihood on a tax grant (*iqtāʿ*) that he received as a descendant of a Mamluk officer. According to the historian's own words, his *iqtāʿ* was so profitable that it could have supported four of the sultan's *mamlūk*s on active duty. As he did not have to work to earn a living, Ibn Iyās was able to dedicate most of his time to independent scholarship and writing. Moreover, his income allowed him to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in 882–3/1477–8. Ibn Iyās' precise death date is unknown, but one of his works indicates that he was still alive in 928/1522.[3]

Ibn Iyās was quite interested in poetry.[4] A great number of his own verses found their way into his historical writings, which were the mainstay of his scholarly work.[5] By far his most famous work is the aforementioned chronicle *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, which is five volumes (in modern print) and was intended to cover the entirety of Egyptian history, from the pre-Islamic era to the end of the year 928/late 1522. Most interesting are those passages in his work that describe events of the author's lifetime. Whereas, for earlier years, Ibn Iyās only mentioned the most important events of each month, when his account reached the later periods, his presentation became much more detailed. The last volumes of his work cover the history of Cairo and the Mamluk Sultanate in great detail, narrating, often on a day-by-day basis, events that took place during his lifetime.[6]

For the last decades of Mamluk rule over Egypt, Ibn Iyās' work is unparalleled in terms of its comprehensiveness and wealth of detail. Written in a simple language that is heavily influenced by the Arabic dialect of Cairo,[7] it includes a vast amount of information on the political, administrative, economic, military,

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3   Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 16–8, 20; Brinner, Ibn Iyās 812. See also Salmon (trans.), *Conquest* viii.

4   On his poetic output, see Guo, Ibn Iyās.

5   Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 17–20. See also Vollers, Chronique 559–61. For overviews of Ibn Iyās' works, see Brinner, Ibn Iyās 813; Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 21–2; Vollers, Chronique 548–9; Wasserstein, Tradition.

6   Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 20, 22. 25. Petry, *Twilight* 9–10; Petry, *Protectors* 7; Irwin, History 169; Tadmīrī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 48; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 267. On the manuscripts of this work, the history of its production, and its editions, see Muṣṭafā, Fātiḥa wa-muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 9–10, 23–31; Brinner, Ibn Iyās 813; Wasserstein, Tradition 85–96, 109–11; Vollers, Chronique 549–57; Lellouch, Douzième *ǧuzʾ*; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 268–9; Martel-Thoumian, Manuscrit.

7   See Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 31–2; Brinner, Ibn Iyās 813; Salmon (trans.), *Conquest* ix; Ross, Review 332; Vollers, Chronique 558–9; Elbendary, *Crowds* 15, 83.

social, cultural, literary, religious, medical, and natural history of the sultanate in general and the Mamluk capital in particular. Ibn Iyās was often either directly involved in or at least an eyewitness of the events he described. In other cases, he relied on his extended personal network of informants to obtain the data he needed for his narrative. Finally, rumors and hearsay were a first-rate source for our author, especially, but not only, for information about events outside Cairo.[8]

The fact that the chronicle is so heavily based on Ibn Iyās' personal experiences has implications that must be taken into account by anyone who uses it as a source of information on the late Mamluk period in general and al-Ghawrī's reign in particular. Ibn Iyās did not hold an office in the administration of the sultanate and was, to the best of our knowledge, not a member of al-Ghawrī's court society. Thus, he had very limited access to the courtly events organized by this ruler. *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* is therefore "effectively an outsider's chronicle, based on public proclamations, gossip, and personal sightings of processions and departing military expeditions."[9] While it is an informative source on how courtly events and their communicative messages were received by the populace of Cairo, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* is ill-suited to provide us with information on courtly events that did not include the broader population or on the dynamics of the inner circles of al-Ghawrī's court society.[10]

The same applies to events taking place outside Cairo. Apart from his pilgrimage to the Hijaz, there is no indication that Ibn Iyās ever left the Mamluk capital for a significant period of time. When discussing Mamluk politics and other topics, this has consequences for his chronicle, which has a strongly Cairo-centered perspective.[11]

As a result of these two points, Ibn Iyās lacked the background information necessary to understand and evaluate al-Ghawrī's actions in the fields of military policy and diplomatic activities. He was therefore unable to comprehend the reasons for many of the sultan's activities in these fields. In particular, it seems that Ibn Iyās underestimated the danger of several external menaces that simultaneously threatened the survival of the sultanate and that made it

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8   Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 31–2. See also Brinner, Ibn Iyās 813; Busool, Empire 96–7, 113–4; Newhall, *Patronage* 4–5; Havemann, Chronicle 96; Winter, Attitudes 197; Tadmīrī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 48; Petry, *Underworld* 19–20; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 5; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 267–8. On Ibn Iyās' reliance on rumors, see Lellouch, Téléphone; Mameche, *Rumeur*.

9   Irwin, Thinking 37.

10   Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 28. See also Havemann, Chronicle 88.

11   Busool, Empire 114; Ross, Review 331. See also Tadmīrī, Fātiḥa wa-muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 8, 48–9; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 9.

necessary for the sultan to use all means available to improve the defensive preparedness of the realm, as is discussed below.[12]

Moreover, Ibn Iyās harbored prejudices against scholars who did not originate from the scholarly circles of the Mamluk Sultanate in which he had received his education. This applied especially to the Persian- and Turkic-speaking learned men and Sufis who played an important role in the intellectual and religious life of al-Ghawrī's court.[13]

Most importantly, the direct contact that Ibn Iyās did have with Sultan al-Ghawrī was bound to have a profound impact on his evaluation of the ruler and his actions. In 914/1508, al-Ghawrī confiscated the tax grants of the descendants of *mamlūk*s (*awlād al-nās*) and distributed them among his soldiers. Ibn Iyās commented on these actions:

> [The sultan] expropriated about 300 hundred tax grants (*iqtāʿ*) and tax farms (*rizqa*) without any misdemeanor [being committed by their holders] and without any cause. [...] None of the previous rulers had done this before. Consequently, universal harm befell the people and especially the *awlād al-nās*, who were attacked in their houses by *mamlūk*s. The latter [*mamlūk*s] took away from the former their deeds (*manāshīr*) [of bestowal of the tax grants] by force and insulted them by beating them. This was a terrible event, nothing of the sort has ever been heard about.[14]

The next sentence reveals why Ibn Iyās laments this incident so vehemently: "And I was among those to whom this happened, and my *iqtāʿ* was taken away."[15] The effect of this incident on a man who depended on his tax grant for his livelihood can hardly be overestimated. Although Ibn Iyās finally, after more than a year, regained his tax grant[16]—through God's direct intervention, as he pointed out[17]—the affair was deeply unsettling for him, and he took it up several times in his chronicle, where he listed the expropriation of the *iqtāʿ*s as one of the most harmful calamities to befall the Islamic community in the year 914/1508–9.[18]

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12   Irwin, Thinking 37–8. See also Busool, Empire 114.
13   Irwin, Thinking 37.
14   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 136.
15   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 136.
16   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 173.
17   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 136.
18   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 150. See also Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Iyās, *Ṣafaḥāt* 16–7; Irwin, Thinking 38; Petry, *Protectors* 7, 86; Petry, *Twilight* 9; Elbendary, *Crowds* 63.

Having identified al-Ghawrī as the person responsible for the expropriation of his *iqtāʿ*, Ibn Iyās consequently took a "highly critical"[19] or even "hostile"[20] stance toward the sultan. Moreover, the fact that Ibn Iyās witnessed the downfall of the Mamluks might have influenced his presentation of al-Ghawrī's reign, too.[21] In contrast to recent claims "[t]hat the historian's motives and feelings are less important […], what can be deduced from Ibn Iyās' account concerns the social and political reality of his time,"[22] I argue that, when relying on *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, scholars must be aware that they are availing themselves of a highly biased and partial source, at least in terms of the presentation and evaluation of the last decades of Mamluk history. Nevertheless, given our lack of alternatives, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* has been used to such a degree that we can consider Ibn Iyās' account today the standard narrative of the history of the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate. Therefore, it is also the basis of the following introductory outline of primarily political events during this period. This outline is intended to provide readers who are unfamiliar with late Mamluk history with the background knowledge necessary for a critical understanding of the following chapters.

2.1.2 *Al-Ghawrī's Reign according to Ibn Iyās*

2.1.2.1 Early Years (906–12/1501–7)

Ibn Iyās says almost nothing about Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī's childhood and youth.[23] According to his information, Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī was born around the year 850/1446–7 into a Circassian family. Brought to Egypt as a slave, Qāniṣawh was manumitted by Sultan Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96).[24] Thereafter, he held positions in the corps of the sultan's masters of the robe (*jamdāriyya*) and then in his *khāṣṣakiyya*. Later, Qāytbāy assigned to al-Ghawrī the post of inspector (*kāshif*) of Upper Egypt. In 889/1484, and thus by Ibn Iyās' calcula-

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19   Brinner, Ibn Iyās 813.

20   Irwin, Thinking 37. See also Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim* 140; Petry, *Twilight* 9; Petry, *Protectors* 7; Petry, *Underworld* 19, 297; Winter, Occupation 494; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 235.

21   Petry, *Twilight* 10. According to Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 486, the part of the work dealing with most of al-Ghawrī's reign was finished in Muḥarram 922/February 1516, i.e., before the Ottoman invasion.

22   Frenkel, Search 276.

23   The following account is almost entirely based on Ibn Iyās' *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*. The footnotes include references to other relevant sources, on which see sections 3.2 to 3.4 below. Moreover, these notes refer to pertinent secondary studies, which for the most part rely heavily on Ibn Iyās. For additional information on al-Ghawrī's life based on the *majālis* texts, see section 4.1.2.1 below.

24   On the slave trade from Circassia to Egypt in this period, see Barker, *Merchandise*, esp. 148–50.

tion, at the relatively advanced age of about forty, al-Ghawrī was promoted to the rank of an *amīr* of ten *mamlūk*s, the lowest rank usually awarded to Mamluk junior officers.[25]

In the following years, al-Ghawrī served in various capacities outside Egypt. While holding the governorship (*niyāba*) of Tarsus, he was involved in the first war between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ottomans. In 894/1489, al-Ghawrī was transferred to the post of chief chamberlain (*ḥājib al-ḥujjāb*) of Aleppo. Thereafter, he became governor of Malatya. Thus, during this period he held positions that tied him to the provincial backwaters of the sultanate. Clearly, he did not rank among the top level positions of the Mamluk administrative system.[26]

Al-Ghawrī's career gained momentum during the succession crisis that erupted in the Mamluk realm after the death of Sultan Qāytbāy in 901/1496. In the course of this crisis, five different men claimed the office of the sultan within a span of just about five years.[27] Already at the beginning of this turbulent phase, Qāytbāy's son, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 901–4/1496–8), promoted al-Ghawrī to the rank of commander of 1,000 soldiers (*amīr miʾa wa-muqaddam alf*). In 905/1500, Muḥammad's successor, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Qāniṣawh (r. 904–6/1498–1500), installed al-Ghawrī as captain of the guard (*raʾs nawbat al-nuwwāb*). One year later, he was appointed chief chancellor (*dawādār*), vizier, and major-domo (*ustādār*) by Ṭūmānbāy al-Ashrafī (d. 906/1501), who, with al-Ghawrī's support, had become ruler with the name al-Malik al-ʿĀdil the same year.[28]

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25   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 191, 207; iv, 2, 5; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-G̱ẖawrī 552; Petry, *Twilight* 123–4. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 294; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 319, 377; Mostafa, Beiträge 202; Petry, *Protectors* 20; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 30–1; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771; Weil, *Egypten* 385.

26   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 264–5, 284; iv, 2; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-G̱ẖawrī 552; Petry, *Twilight* 124–5. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 294–5; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 46–7; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 113; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 319–20, 377; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 90; Har-El, *Struggle* 125–6, 134, 142; Mostafa, Beiträge 202; Petry, *Twilight* 125; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 31; Weil, *Egypten* 385; al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* v, 187. Cf. for the evaluation of al-Ghawrī's early career, Petry, *Twilight* 124–7; Petry, *Protectors* 20; Petry, Innovations 446.

27   A detailed analysis of this period would have to rely on European sources, such as Martyr, *Legatio* 256–71, and remains a desideratum. For the time being, see, e.g., Holt, *Age* 198; Petry, *Twilight* 125–8; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 31–3; Weil, *Egypten* 360–83; Frenkel, Search 267–71; Apellániz, *Pouvoir* 207–11; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 243–66.

28   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 381, 431, 451, 453–4, 457, 475; iv, 2; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-G̱ẖawrī 552; Petry, *Twilight* 125–6. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 46; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 15, 46, 49, 68, 94, 99, 109, 112–3, 115; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* ii, 1147; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 113; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq*

When Ṭūmānbāy was deposed and went into hiding in the course of a troop mutiny in late Ramaḍān 906/April 1501, a group of high-ranking *amīr*s elected al-Ghawrī to the sultanate. It is telling that they came to this decision only after the election of seemingly more promising candidates had finally been discarded. Al-Ghawrī "refused and wept"[29] when being informed about the *amīr*s' intention to declare him sultan and continued to do so while being robed in the sultan's garments. Nevertheless, he received the *amīr*s' loyalty oaths and was ritually invested by the ʿAbbasid caliph of Cairo and the chief judges on 1 Shawwāl 906/20 April 1501.[30] Al-Ghawrī's ostensibly unhappy reaction might have been out of fear for his life in the case of removal from office, although some authors thought it was "of only ceremonial nature."[31] On this "compelled" enthronement, Peter M. Holt comments that it "was probably intended as a temporary expedient: he [that is, al-Ghawrī] was already about sixty years old, and he had not played an outstanding part in court politics."[32] In the eleventh/seventeenth century, the historian al-Karmī noted that the *amīr*s had agreed on al-Ghawrī "because they saw him as of a feeble disposition and easy to depose at any time they wanted to."[33]

Once proclaimed sultan, al-Ghawrī found himself, straightaway, in utmost danger. None of his five immediate predecessors had remained in office for much longer than two years, three of them paid for their failure with their lives.[34] To quote again Holt's analysis:

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al-akhbār ii, 918; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 124–7; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 234; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 320, 377; Mostafa, Beiträge 202–3; Petry, *Protectors* 20; Petry, *Twilight* 125–7; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 31–3; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771; Weil, *Egypten* 385. On the fact that *dawādār*s are often known to have had scholarly interests, see Mauder, Development 975–7.

29 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 4.

30 Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 2–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 33–5; Weil, *Egypten* 385–6. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* ii, 1158–9; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 47; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 121–123; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 113; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 920, 923; Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Taʿlīq* iv, 1901; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 132, 134–5; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 237, 239; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 320, 377; Martyr, *Legatio* 268–71; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 239; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 324; Mostafa, Beiträge 203–4; Petry, *Twilight* 126, 128–9; Petry, *Protectors* 20–1; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 6, 33–5; 48; Sobernheim and Kafesoğlu, Kansu 163; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 613.

31 Mostafa, Beiträge 204. See Sievert, Kampf 361, on the newly nominated rulers' refusal to be enthroned.

32 Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552 (both quotations). See, also Holt, *Age* 198; al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ* ii, 55.

33 Al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159.

34 Weil, *Egypten* 360–83.

Al-Ghawrī's situation at the outset was precarious. Two of his predecessors were still living. A more serious threat came from the veteran royal *mamlūk*s (*ḳarāniṣa*), since their privileged status was weakened on the accession of a new sultan who would recruit his own *mamlūk*s. […] A further danger was represented by the […] powerful *amīr*s who had acted as kingmakers at his ascension.[35]

For al-Ghawrī, things were made worse by the fact that a group of *amīr*s belonging to Ṭūmānbāy's faction[36] went into hiding immediately after al-Ghawrī's ascension to the throne. The new sultan tried to quell any opposition in advance by treating those *amīr*s who had suffered under Ṭūmānbāy's reign kindly. Moreover, he staffed the most important offices of the sultanate with those who had supported his ascension. He did this at the cost of Ṭūmānbāy's followers, some of whom he fined, imprisoned, and exiled. When confronted with demands by the troops for tax grants (sg. *iqṭāʿ*) and paid positions, al-Ghawrī was only able to pacify the situation by threatening them with his immediate resignation from office. Shortly afterward, he sent his predecessor's *mamlūk*s on an expedition to Upper Egypt, in order to prevent them from causing further unrest in the capital. Nevertheless, rank-and-file *mamlūk*s continued to trouble the sultan by claiming the traditional allowances due to them when a new ruler ascended to rule.[37]

During the first weeks of his reign, with his predecessor Ṭūmānbāy still in hiding, al-Ghawrī intensified the search for him. Finding Ṭūmānbāy was even more pressing for al-Ghawrī, as his rival tried to solicit support from dissatisfied members of the military by spreading letters and pamphlets in the markets. Finally, the former sultan was betrayed by one of his supporters, seized, and killed in Dhū l-Qāʿda 906/May 1501.[38]

After eliminating his predecessor, al-Ghawrī turned to the problem posed by the rank-and-file *mamlūk*s who continued to demand their ascension allow-

35   Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Petry, *Twilight* 130.
36   I use "faction," as introduced in Irwin, Factions.
37   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 4–9, 12–3; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Weil, *Egypten* 386. See also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 47; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 123–8; Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Taʿlīq* iv, 1903, 1906–7, 1909; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 136–8; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 237, 239–41; Petry, *Protectors* 21; Petry, *Twilight* 132–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 38–41, 48. On how new Mamluk rulers consolidated their position, see Sievert, Kampf 336–8; Sievert, Family 109–17.
38   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 7 and 9–11; Weil, *Egypten* 386–7. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 126, 133; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 137–8; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 240–2; Petry, *Twilight* 130–2; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 35–7.

ances. Lamenting that the treasury was empty, the sultan conferred with the *amīr*s on what to do. After these consultations, word spread in Cairo that the sultan was going to strip the inalienable pious endowments (sg. *waqf*) of the mosques and institutions of higher religious education (sg. *madrasa*) of their landholdings and distribute them among the troops. These plans, which not only implied a serious violation of the law, but also a severe threat to the needs of the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and the poor,[39] were met with staunch opposition by the heads of the Shāfiʿī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī law schools. The Ḥanafī chief judge, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 921/1515), was the only one willing to give his legal consent to the sultan's scheme. In a second meeting with the *amīr*s in early Muḥarram 907/July 1501, the sultan decided to abstain from a total expropriation of the *waqf*s, and instead confiscated only the equivalent of one year's income. Nevertheless, Ibn Iyās was unambiguous in labeling this action as an act of injustice (*maẓlima*).[40] Moreover, groups such as those who held grants among the reservist corps of the army (*ḥalqa*),[41] women recipients of stipends, the Christian and the Jewish communities, and the owners of shops and other kinds of property were forced to make considerable contributions to the treasury—in the case of property owners, this was an amount equal to ten months' rental fees. As a consequence, the realm suffered from various forms of protest, including market closures organized by the shopkeepers, the suspension of the Friday prayer in mosques all over Cairo, lethal clashes between the retinue of military officials and outraged civilians in the capital, and the stoning of high-ranking *amīr*s in Egypt and Syria. Because of the civil opposition against these unpopular measures, they were only implemented on a reduced scale. It took the sultan's men four months to collect enough money to pay even some of the *mamlūk*s the ascension allowances they demanded and about one and a half years to complete the disbursement to the entire army.[42]

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39   Cf. for the consequences of such a step, Petry, *Twilight* 147.

40   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 15.

41   On this unit, see Ayalon, Structure II, 448–59.

42   Cf. for the course of events, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 13–7, 19, 23, 25, 41; Petry, *Protectors* 172; Sartain, *Biography* 17; Weil, *Egypten* 387–8. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 129, 132–7, 160; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 254, 258; Petry, *Twilight* 146–7 (emphasizing Ibn al-Shiḥna's role); Petry, Innovations 458–9; Petry, *Protectors* 203–4; Petry, Institution 474, 485; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 60–1, 71–5; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 613–4; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 336–8, 371. On expropriations of *waqf*s in general, see Lev, *Charity* 57–8, 64–6, 154–5. Al-Ghawrī also resorted to a debasement of the currency, cf. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 144; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 22, 24–5; v, 89. See also Meloy, Money, esp. 295, 300, 302, 307–11, 319.

When seen from a broader perspective, these events, which were followed by many similar ones in the months and years to come,[43] represent more than just the destitute state of the Mamluk Sultanate in the days of al-Ghawrī's reign. These events also greatly contributed to the sultan's image as a tyrannical and greedy ruler. Ibn Iyās repeatedly criticized al-Ghawrī's unjust acts (sg. *maẓlima*) against almost every element of society, calling him "the meanest and for sure most avaricious of God's creatures."[44] Similarly, Ibn Iyās stated that "no one was dearer to the sultan than one who gave him money."[45]

Al-Ghawrī dealt with the threat posed by the high-ranking *amīr*s who had supported his rise to the sultanate as "kingmakers"[46] by eliminating them as soon as circumstances permitted. In Muḥarram 907/July 1501, he ordered the detention of the *dawādār* Miṣr Bāy (d. 907/1502) and several lower ranking *amīr*s. Shortly thereafter, all remaining *amīr*s had to swear on a Quran manuscript believed to have been written by the caliph ʿUthmān[47] that they would not rebel against the sultan. This took place in the presence of the ʿAbbasid caliph and the chief judges. Nevertheless, groups of *mamlūk*s of al-Ghawrī's predecessors kept causing unrest, while the sultan continued to depose and arrest *amīr*s whose loyalty he considered doubtful.[48]

It was only at the beginning of the year 908/July 1502, that "the sultan's authority in the sultanate became complete (*tamma*) and the foundations of

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43 The chroniclers' reports about subsequent cases of expropriations, confiscations, extortions, fines, and cutbacks to provisions are too numerous to list here in detail. Instead, see Clifford, Observations 258–9; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Jansky, Eroberung 179; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 75–85; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771; Sobernheim and Kafesoğlu, Kansu 163; Weil, *Egypten* 388–9; Winter, Occupation 494; Mostafa, Beiträge 207–8; Petry, *Protectors* 171–3; Petry, *Twilight* 164–7; Petry, Institution 472–5; Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 48.

44 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 441.

45 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 477. On al-Ghawrī's injustice, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 87–92, 101–2; al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 62–3; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 47–8; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 240–3; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 324–5.

46 Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552.

47 On such Quran copies as symbols of rule, see section 1.2.1 above; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 90; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rules* 73; Bosworth, Courts 361; Sourdel, Cérémonial 135–6; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 363; Bennison, Drums 207–8; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 323–4, 353; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 151; Drews, *Karolinger* 100–1, 278.

48 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 17–8, 21, 23, 28; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 133–4, 162; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 147; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 247; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 241; Petry, *Twilight* 134–7; Petry, *Protectors* 89–90; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 54–5. For subsequent examples of oaths on the Quran, see Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 176; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 41, 49, 65, 89, 98, 103, 180, 313, 318, 485–6.

his rule were established (*thabatat*),"[49] as Ibn Iyās noted. As the rapid pace of changes in the most important offices of the sultanate slowed down and administrative stability seemed to return, for the first time in al-Ghawrī's reign Ibn Iyās saw fit to give a complete list of all the important functionaries in the realm.[50] Most prominently among the members of the ruling elite in this list is the grand *amīr* (*amīr kabīr*) Qayt al-Rajabī, who had firmly supported al-Ghawrī's ascension to the sultanate and thereafter served as the ruler's second-in-command. However, in 910/1504, Qayt al-Rajabī was ousted from office and arrested for alleged plans to depose the sultan.[51] Al-Ghawrī obviously feared the influential *amīr* as a potential rival and considered him a major menace to his rule.[52]

Qayt al-Rajabī's place as the sultan's most important confidant and ally in the military elite was taken over by a blood relative of the sultan, his nephew Ṭūmānbāy (d. 923/1517), not to be confused with his namesake al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Ṭūmānbāy al-Ashrafī, al-Ghawrī's predecessor as Mamluk ruler. Appointed to a relatively minor position in the sultan's household in late 910/early 1505, Ṭūmānbāy reached the rank of *muqaddam alf* in 911/1506 and was made *dawādār* in 913/1507, holding the additional post of *ustādār* from 914/1508 onward. Well-regarded by both his uncle al-Ghawrī and the common people, Ṭūmānbāy became one of the most important pillars of the sultan's reign.[53]

After stabilizing his rule in early 908/mid-1502, al-Ghawrī was forced to deal with his first crisis in transregional Mamluk policy. Reports had arrived about an armed conflict in the Hijaz. In the late Mamluk period, this part of the

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49   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 30. Cf. also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 41. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 157.

50   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 30–5. Cf. for Ibn Iyās' motives for providing this list, Petry, *Twilight* 137. For similar lists, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 111–2, 357–8, 434–5; v, 3–6.

51   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 73–5, 425; v, 167; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* ii, 1451; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 168–9; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 284–6; Petry, *Twilight* 138–9; Petry, *Protectors* 21, 170; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 56.

52   For a hint that Qayt had been suspected of planning to overthrow the sultan, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 67. For reports about a rebellion of the high-ranking Syria-based *amīr* Sībāy (d. 922/1516) in 910/1504, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 70–2, 74, 76–7, 81; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 165–8, 175; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 281–5, 290, 298; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Mostafa, Beiträge 223. For a possible collaboration between Qayt al-Rajabī and Sībāy, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 73; Petry, *Twilight* 138–9; Petry, *Protectors* 37–8; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 56. For a later purported conspiracy against the sultan, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 97.

53   Cf. for Ṭūmānbāy's career under al-Ghawrī and his popularity, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 78, 93, 121, 131, 142, 256, 414–6, 468; v, 46–7, 50, 54–5, 102–3, 176; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Holt, Ṭūmān Bāy 621. See also Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 190–1; Petry, *Twilight* 142–5, 158–9; Petry, *Protectors* 21–2; Weil, *Egypten* 418.

Arabian Peninsula was ruled by a semi-autonomous Meccan-based dynasty of descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad,[54] the Sharīfs, who usually recognized the sultan in Cairo as their overlord. At this point, a succession crisis erupted in which various Sharīfī brothers, supported by coalitions of local allies, fought for control over Mecca and its surroundings. In the course of the conflict, the pilgrimage caravans that enjoyed the sultan's protection were attacked and many pilgrims and soldiers killed. Al-Ghawrī therefore sent an expeditionary force to the Hijaz; with this he managed to pacify the situation for the time.[55]

Once his rule was stabilized, al-Ghawrī cast an eye on the foreign merchants active in his realm and began to demand special levies from them. Ibn Iyās laments the "confiscations (*muṣādarāt*) [of the property of] Anatolian merchants (*tujjār al-arwām*) and [...] injustice (*jawr*) against them."[56] Moreover, the chronicler noted that the sultan's aides "ruined the port city of Alexandria, Damietta, the seaport of Jidda, and other port cities due to the confiscations [of the property of] the merchants. So the business of the port cities and seaports was crushed at that time."[57] Zayn al-Dīn Barakāt b. Mūsā (d. 929/1523), who became market inspector of the Mamluk capital in 910/1505, was instrumental in al-Ghawrī's interactions with merchants and tradesmen. Moreover, he served as al-Ghawrī's henchman, taking care of confiscations, and torturing offenders and those who were late in making payments. Nevertheless, the common people held him in high regard.[58]

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54   On the relationship between the rulers of Mecca and the Mamluks, see, e.g., Meloy, *Power* 233–9; Petry, *Protectors* 39–40.

55   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 35–8, 47–9, 54–7, 62; Weil, *Egypten* 390–1. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 143–4, 148, 153, 156–8, 168–70, 172–3, 176; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 150–1, 154–6, 162; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 261, 264–5, 267; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 320–1; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 924–5; Ibn Ẓuhayra, *al-Jāmiʿ al-laṭīf* ii, 342–3; de Varthema, *Travels* 35–6; Clifford, Observations 260–1; Petry, *Protectors* 40–2; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 106–10; and esp. Meloy, *Power* 205–18 (relying mainly on Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* ii, 1163, iii, 1594).

56   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 44. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 45. On *muṣādara*, see Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 59–60; Miura, Networks 51–5; Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 212.

57   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv 45. See also Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 173; Martyr, *Legatio* 210–3.

58   Cf. for Barakāt b. Mūsā's career during al-Ghawrī's reign and examples of his activities, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 50, 75–6, 86, 114–5, 144, 146, 190, 274–5, 328, 364, 375, 377–8, 381–3, 392–3; 397; v, 19, 27, 46; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Petry, *Twilight* 148–9, 151–2. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 171, 185–6; Petry, *Protectors* 23–4, 144–7; Winter, Occupation 508–9, 514; Berkey, Muḥtasibs 257–8, 273–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 64–5, 80.

2.1.2.2   Middle Years (912–9/1507–13)

The middle years of al-Ghawrī's sultanate were marked by relative peace and tranquility throughout the realm, especially after renewed unrest in the Hijaz was quelled by a Mamluk force in 912/1507.[59] Apart from minor clashes with unruly Bedouin tribes and small-scale border warfare with troops of the new Safawid ruler of Iran, Shāh Ismāʿīl (r. 906–30/1501–24),[60] military activities in this period were mainly limited to operations safeguarding the Mamluk sphere of influence in the Red Sea region.

Here, a new and unprecedented danger had appeared: In 903/1497, a small Portuguese fleet under the command of Vasco da Gama (d. 931/1524) had circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope and reached India in the following year, thus opening the route to the subcontinent for European sailors. Subsequently, the Portuguese began to establish strongholds on the shores of the Indian Ocean. They attacked and captured port cities, and looted and sank ships carrying Muslim pilgrims and merchants; in sum, their fleet operating in the Indian Ocean represented a serious threat to Egypt's profitable trade with South Asia.[61]

Al-Ghawrī reacted to this novel menace and the local Muslim rulers' pleas for help by sending military expeditions to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to counter the Portuguese activities in the region. In early 911/late 1505, Ibn Iyās mentions the deployment of the sultan's troops "toward the countries of India."[62] The units that confronted the European intruders at sea consisted largely of "descendants of *mamlūk*s (*awlād al-nās*), people from the Maghrib,

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59   Cf. for the situation in the Hijaz and the Mamluk intervention, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 89, 93, 101–2, 104, 106–7, 109, 111, 116–8. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 187; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 321–2; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 110–2; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 320ʳ–338ʳ.

60   Cf. for the Bedouins Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 115–9, 121–3, 125, 180, 214–5, 217–30, 238, 256–8, 260, 262, 264–6, 268, 271–2; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552–3; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 51–3. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1644, 1825, 1866–7; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 188–9; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 314–8, 322–4, 326, 329–31, 333–5, 339–40, 344, 356, 361; Fuess, Dreikampf 241; Humphreys, World System 460–1; Petry, Innovations 443; Petry, Institution 466; Petry, *Twilight* 154–5, 173–5; Petry, *Protectors* 49–50; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 123–4; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 614–5. On Mamluk relations with the Safawids, see Ağalarlı, Bakiş; Clifford, Observations [both parts]; Rabie, Relations; Mauder, Head. For the sultan's policy regarding the Bedouin tribes, see Petry, Others 170–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 49–54.

61   Weil, *Egypten* 391–5; Serjeant, *Portuguese* 4, 13–5. See also Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 115; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 1; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Meloy, *Power* 218–22, 224–5; Najīb, al-Istiʿdādāt 297–8; Petry, Innovations 443; Petry, War 98, 106; Petry, Institution 466–7; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771–2; Stripling, *Turks* 26–32; Subrahmanyam, *Empire* 56–66; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 616–7; Irwin, Journey 170–1.

62   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 84.

black shooters (sg. *rammāḥ*)[63] and Turkmens."[64] They seldom included regular mounted *mamlūk*s. In addition to these fighting forces, builders were dispatched to the Red Sea in order to fortify the port city of Jidda.[65]

At first, it seemed that the Mamluk counter-measures against the Portuguese fleet would be successful. The Egyptian troops and their local allies won a first naval battle in 913/1508, seized a European ship, and captured many enemy sailors. The fortunes of war, however, soon turned: In early 915/1509, news arrived in Cairo that the sultan's fleet had suffered a severe defeat in which most of its soldiers had perished. As a result of their victory, the Portuguese were able to capture and plunder merchant vessels operating in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean without fear of serious resistance or retaliation. Moreover, the port cities of the Arabian Peninsula, such as Aden, lay open to attack.[66]

Following the defeat of his expeditionary force, the sultan intensified his efforts to construct a new war fleet in the Red Sea, one that would be able to meet the Portuguese navy on equal terms. Since the Mamluk realm was in short supply of the necessary ship-building materials, al-Ghawrī obtained the necessary goods from the Ottoman sultan, Bāyezīd II (r. 886–918/1481–1512). Furthermore, the Ottomans supported the Mamluk naval operations by dispatching about 2,000 marines to the Red Sea to assist al-Ghawrī's forces in their fight against the Portuguese. But despite the Ottoman assistance and although the sultan himself made a trip to Suez to inspect the construction process, the outfitting of the second fleet took so long that almost no news of its actions reached Egypt before the end of al-Ghawrī's reign.[67]

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63   It is not clear whether *rammāḥ* means "archers" or "harquebusiers" in this context, cf. Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552.

64   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 84. See also Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552.

65   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 82, 84–5, 95–6, 116, 124, 142, 146, 182, 287; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 1. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1576–8; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 115; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 321–2; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 245–6; al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 172; Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 79, 81; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 1–2; Goetz, Antagonist 170; Meloy, *Power* 222–3; Serjeant, *Portuguese* 15; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 114–5; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 771; Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 443–4; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 618.

66   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 142, 146, 156, 182–3, 286, 307–8, 331, 359, 383; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Weil, *Egypten* 397. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1636–7, 1666–8, 1714–5, 1889–4, 1896, 1897, 1909–11, 1944, 1964, 1978–9; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 189; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 2; Goetz, Antagonist 169; Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 445–8; Meloy, *Power* 205, 222–3; Petry, *Protectors* 59; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 115–7; Serjeant, *Portuguese* 15–6; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 618.

67   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 109, 124, 150–1, 183–5, 191–3, 196, 201, 285, 308, 310–1, 320, 331, 335,

A second, related project was the establishment of a new armed unit that stood outside the regular military system of the sultanate: the so-called al-Ṭabaqa al-Khāmisa (Fifth Corps). This unit, which took its name from the fact that it received its pay after the four regular corps of the army, is mentioned by Ibn Iyās for the first time in Shawwāl 916/January 1511.[68] It consisted of Turkmens, Persians, descendants of *mamlūk*s, and other groups of people who did not serve in the regular Mamluk forces. Moreover, its members did not wield the typical weapons of mounted *mamlūk*s, such as bows and lances, but instead fought on foot with firearms. The unit saw service on the ships of the newly equipped Red Sea fleet.[69] The establishment of this unit was an important and innovative, if contested,[70] part of the sultan's military policy, which also included measures to improve the training of his mounted troops and to increase the number of cannons available to his army.[71]

As for the internal affairs of the sultanate, the ruler's *mamlūk*s continued to be a source of unrest and turmoil throughout the sultan's reign—especially when they felt that their material needs were neglected. To give just one of many possible examples: In Muḥarram 916/April 1510, severe riots broke out

337, 355, 362–8, 381–2, 435–6, 458–60, 466–7; v, 83, 115, 203; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1900–1; 1954; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 189–90; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 115; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 246–8; Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 64; Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 78–82; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 2–20; Brummett, *Seapower* 111–21; Fuess, Ships 58–60; Fuess, Dreikampf 242–3; Fuess, Janissaires 213–4; Fuess, *Ufer, passim*; Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 455–8; Najīb, al-Istiʿdādāt 299–300; Petry, *Twilight* 190; Petry, *Protectors* 60; Petry, War 106–7; Ross, Portuguese 1–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 96–9, 117–8; Serjeant, *Portuguese* 16–7; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 772; Stripling, *Turks* 32–5, 38; Weil, *Egypten* 396–7; Pradines, Fortifications 46.

68   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 200. On the payment of this unit, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 206, 260, 269, 281, 324, 340, 360, 369–70, 428, 444; and moreover Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 72–6; Mostafa, Beiträge 219; Petry, Innovations 449–51; Petry, Institution 480–2; Petry, *Protectors* 193–4.

69   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 206, 308, 324, 331, 337, 435–6, 458–9, 467; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Fuess, Janissaires 214; Holt, *Age* 199; Mostafa, Beiträge 218–9; Najīb, al-Istiʿdādāt 301; Petry, Innovations 450, 452–3; Petry, Institution, 481–3; Petry, War 106–7; Petry, *Protectors* 193, 195–6. Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 60, 71–8, 82.

70   Cf. for its innovative character, Petry, Innovations 449–53; Petry, Institution 480–3; Petry, *Protectors* 193–5.

71   Cf. on the training of mounted soldiers, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 59–60, 151, 180, 182, 201, 230, 391–2, 445–6, 448, 455. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 165; Ayalon, Notes 43–5, 51–3, 55; Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 52, 57–8, 110; Holt, Mamlūks 324; Petry, *Protectors* 191–3. Cf. on cannons, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 123, 142, 191–2, 194, 229–30, 238, 243, 260–1, 264–7, 288, 310, 340, 366, 374–5, 425; v, 14. See also Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 48–50; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Najīb, al-Istiʿdādāt 300–1, 310–1; Petry, Innovations 447–9; Petry, Institution 479–80; Petry, *Twilight* 162–3; Petry, *Protectors* 192; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 96–7; Pradines, Fortifications 31.

when the sultan refused to pay a special allowance (one hundred *dīnār*s each) to his newly recruited slave soldiers (*julbān*). Previously, because of the fiscal crisis, they had not received their meat rations on time. When their claims were not met, the *mamlūk*s forced leading *amīr*s to intercede with the ruler on their behalf. Al-Ghawrī was not willing to change his mind and, according to Ibn Iyās, "almost unseated himself from the sultanate"[72] as a reaction to the demands. Seeing that the sultan was not willing to yield to their claims, the *mamlūk*s armed themselves and began to loot important markets in Cairo. Soon, the *amīr*s locked themselves in their houses, fearing violence from the *mamlūk*s who, joined by servants and black slaves, had already plundered goods equaling about 10,000 *dīnār*s. The unrest continued for three days. During these days, the slave soldiers not only ignored the commands of their sultan, but even tried to persuade one of the high-ranking *amīr*s to depose al-Ghawrī. However, their candidate for the sultanate refused to join them. When rumors spread that the *amīr*s were planning a counter-attack against them, the mutinying troops finally returned to their barracks. Those servants and slaves who continued to ignore the directives of the authorities were executed. In the aftermath of the turmoil, Ṭūmānbāy did his best to return the goods stolen by the *mamlūk*s to their rightful owners, while Barakāt b. Mūsā calculated the loss on the sultan's behalf. When the situation quieted down, the latter ordered the *mamlūk*s to swear on the ʿUthmānī Quran copy that they would never again rebel against him. Thereafter, the sultan gave the soldiers a special allowance, equal to a small portion of their original demands.[73]

2.1.2.3   Late Years (919–22/1513–6)

The overall state of the sultanate changed for the worse when a severe outbreak of the plague (*ṭāʿūn*) struck Egypt in 919/1513. The death toll in Cairo was high, especially among children, slaves, and foreigners, including non-native members of the military.[74] In reaction, al-Ghawrī ordered the heirs of

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72 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 177.

73 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 177–80. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 193, states that the *mamlūk*s tried to kill the sultan. For later similar events, see, e.g., Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 267; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 235, 241–3, 359, 368–71; 427–31, 463–5, 483–7; Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 56–7. Moreover, see Clifford, Observations 259; Mostafa, Beiträge 221–2; Petry, *Protectors* 85; Petry, Innovations 443–5, 465; Petry, Institution 468–9, 488; Petry, *Twilight* 161–2, 186–8; Petry, *Underworld* 36–7; Petry, *Protectors* 88–90, 92–5; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 59–62.

74 Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 296–9, 301–10, 312, 318; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 18. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 245, 250–1, 253, 259; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 202–3; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 376–9; Ashtor, *History* 302; Ayalon [Neustadt], Plague 72; Dols,

all deceased *mamlūk*s and government officials to deliver a fixed set of goods (for example, two horses) to the state treasury or pay their equivalent in cash. This policy, repeatedly labeled by Ibn Iyās as an unprecedented act of injustice (*maẓlima*),[75] met with such staunch opposition by the circles concerned that al-Ghawrī was forced to cancel it, partially, after a few days. However, shortly thereafter, the sultan again faced the wrath of his subjects when he was blamed for a rise in food prices during the crisis of the plague. He reacted by canceling extra taxes (*mukūs*) that, while very lucrative, had contributed to the high prices. Moreover, the market inspector Barakāt b. Mūsā announced fixed prices for basic commodities on the sultan's behalf.[76]

While the plague continued to cause havoc among the population of Cairo, with more than 3,000 people dying on some days according to Ibn Iyās' estimation,[77] the sultan was hit by yet another calamity. From mid-Rabīʿ I 919/late May 1513 onward, al-Ghawrī refused to leave the Duhaysha Hall of the Cairo Citadel because of an eye disease contracted earlier. As a consequence, rumors about his health spread in the capital. Although the sultan tried to counter these allegations about his inability to execute his office by appearing repeatedly before larger audiences during the following weeks, the mood in the capital remained strained while al-Ghawrī was not in full command of his physical faculties.[78]

Nevertheless, the sultan was hesitant to yield to the advice of his physicians and give his consent to an operation on his inflamed eyes. He resisted in spite of the negative effects his illness had on his ability to perform his duties, and even in the face of rumors that he had become blind and thus unfit for rule, and was planning to install his son as his successor. Moreover, it was said that

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Death 173; Mostafa, Beiträge 205–6; Petry, *Twilight* 196–7; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 18. For other outbreaks of the plague under al-Ghawrī, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 63–4, 75–8, 109, 302, 375; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 928; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 158–9; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 271–2; Suriano, *Treatise* 192; Ayalon [Neustadt], Plague 67; Dols, *Death* 314; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 615. On the fact that children, slaves, and foreigners were especially affected, see Ayalon [Neustadt], Plague 69–70; Dols, *Death* 185–7. On the economic impact on Mamluk Egypt, see, e.g., Borsch, *Death*; Borsch, Thirty; Dols, *Death* 255–83; Humphreys, World System 457–9; Pamuk and Shatzmiller, Plagues 210–2, 223; Daisuke, *Tenure* 14–7. On the consequences for the Mamluk army, see Ayalon [Neustadt], Plague; Dols, *Death* 185–93.

75   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 301–2.

76   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 301–5. For the seizure of the inheritances of deceased members of the military, see also, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 405–6, 447, 452; v, 16, 26.

77   Cf. for this figure, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 308. For the problematic character of such figures, however, see Dols, *Death* 175–83, 193, 204–15, 218–23, 228, 301; Dols, Mortality 397–8, 404–7, 411–2, 416.

78   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 307, 309. On the sultan's eye disease and events related to it, see also Meyerhof, Augenkrankheit; Mardam Bik, *al-Malik* 263–7; Mostafa, Beiträge 206; Petry, *Twilight* 196–9; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 23.

given the present ruler's weakness, conspirators among the *amīr*s made plans to restore one of the sultan's predecessors to office or have a high-ranking military commander take over.[79]

Al-Ghawrī, still ill, fell back on various measures to counter the growing opposition to his rule and avert a coup d'état: He released numerous captives, pardoned officials who had fallen from grace, had the *amīr*s swear allegiance to him on the allegedly ʿUthmānī Quran copy mentioned above, distributed special allowances to the army and the religious establishment, and gave alms to the needy.[80] These final actions were extremely costly, but were, ostensibly at least, motivated by the sultan's religious considerations; he hoped to ensure a speedy recovery by doing good deeds.[81] After a period of about three months of suffering, the sultan's health indeed improved. A few weeks later, he undid most of the meritorious measures that had curtailed revenue, so that "everything was again subjected to its respective aspects of injustice (*ẓulm*), as it had been in the beginning."[82] Nevertheless, the people rejoiced when the sultan was finally completely cured by his physicians and magnificent celebrations were organized to commemorate his recovery and show everyone that he was again in full command of his faculties.[83]

In early 920/1514, new problems appeared when elements of the army again became mutinous because their meat rations were delayed by several months. The course of events resembled those of similar earlier crises, when the sultan's own *mamlūk*s (*al-mamālīk al-ajlāb*) had looted the city and threatened their commanders until their financial demands were met, at least in part.[84] Ibn Iyās, however, used this particular mutiny to give an overall description of the economic situation of the Mamluk realm. He writes:

> [The financial agencies of the sultanate] were in the utmost need of money and in complete disrepair, the seaport of Alexandria was desolated (*kharāb*) and no incoming [ships] had entered it during the past year, the seaport of Jidda was deserted due to the violence of the Europeans against

79   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 310–6, 319, 325–6, 330–2, 336, 357. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1903, 1914; Mauder, Rule 170, 176.

80   Cf. for these measures, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 316–24, 326, 328, 438.

81   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 320–4, 329.

82   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 329. Cf. for the context, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 328–9, 357.

83   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 325–6, 330–7, 357. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 246–7; section 6.3.3 below.

84   Cf. for the course of events, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 359–60, 368–71. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 62–4.

the merchants in the Indian Sea, and no ship had brought its goods to the seaport of Jidda for about six years, and the same applies to Damietta. Moreover, in these days Lower Egypt was in utmost disorder (*iḍṭirāb*) due to the viciousness of the Bedouins.[85]

Thus, according to the chronicler, the general problem that overshadowed al-Ghawrī's entire reign, that is, the lack of funds mainly caused by Egypt's being cut off from transregional trade routes, worsened again during his last years.

However, another field of transregional politics required the sultan's immediate attention. In Rabīʿ I 920/May 1514, an envoy from the new Ottoman sultan, Selīm Yavuz (r. 918–26/1512–20), arrived in Cairo. He brought news that Sultan Selīm was going to march against the Safawid ruler Shāh Ismāʿīl and his strongholds in Iraq and Iran, thus passing, but not entering Mamluk-ruled Syria. Al-Ghawrī treated the envoy kindly and invested him with a robe of honor, but was not willing to lend any tangible support to the Ottoman campaign against the Safawids, although the latter had made hostile moves against the Mamluk Sultanate in the past.[86] Instead, the sultan followed his *amīr*s' advice to send a large expeditionary force to Aleppo, northern Syria, that should screen the activities of both the Safawid and the Ottoman armies, but abstain from any involvement in full-scale fighting, as long as neither party to the conflict showed signs of treacherous or aggressive behavior against the Mamluk realm.[87] Moreover, he decided to send a high-ranking *amīr* as an envoy to the Ottoman sultan in order to obtain firsthand information on his intentions.[88] Obviously, the Mamluk sultan did not trust the opposing parties, neither the potentially hostile Shiʿi Safawids nor the nominally friendly Sunni Ottomans. He even paid a visit to the tombs of local revered religious figures and gave alms to the needy in an effort

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85   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 359. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 368–9; 371–2; v, 90.
86   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 39, 118–9, 121–3, 218–30, 257–8, 262, 265–6, 268, 271–2, 372–3, 378, 381. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 296; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1644, 1825, 1866–7; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 49–50; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 158, 196, 214, 216–7; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 252, 261; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 151, 188–9. On Safawid aggression, see also Allouche, *Origins* 82, 89–93; Clifford, Observations 257, 261–5, 275; Fuess, Dreikampf 241; Holt, Ḵānṣawh al-G̲h̲awrī 552–3; Petry, *Twilight* 175–8, 202–4; Petry, *Protectors* 50; Rabie, Relations 76–9; Salīm, *al-G̲h̲ūrī* 124–5; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 629–30; Winter, Occupation 494–5. On steps to form a Mamluk-Ottoman alliance against the Safawids, see Clifford, Observations 268–70, 276–7; Rabie, Relations 76.
87   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 376. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1951–2, 1954; Fuess, Dreikampf 242; Petry, *Twilight* 205–6; Salīm, *al-G̲h̲ūrī* 133–4.
88   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 378, 381.

to secure God's support for his course "as he was in great anxiety because of the Ottoman [sultan] and the Safawid [ruler]."[89]

While the dispatch of the Mamluk expeditionary force to Syria was still in progress,[90] a new Ottoman envoy arrived; like the other envoy, he was lavishly greeted and entertained.[91] Shortly thereafter, rumors about the Ottoman army's glorious victory against the Safawid forces spread in Cairo. In the past, news and rumors about Ottoman military successes against non-Sunnis had been received with outright joy in Egypt and Syria.[92] This time, however, the sultan reacted in a more solemn manner when he learned about the Ottoman success: Quran readings were organized in the major mosques of Cairo and a banquet was given for the needy.[93] When the news of the Safawids' defeat at Chāldirān in Rajab 920/August 1514 and Sultan Selīm's conquest of important Iranian cities such as Tabrīz were confirmed by an official envoy shortly thereafter, neither al-Ghawrī nor his *amīr*s showed the slightest inclination to celebrate this Ottoman victory. Ibn Iyās noted: "They were on their guard (*akhadhū ḥidhrahum*) because of the Ottoman [sultan], and were afraid (*khashū*) of his power and the degree of his strength."[94]

The mood of the leaders of the Mamluk Sultanate further deteriorated when it turned out that the dispatch of the Mamluk expeditionary force to Aleppo had descended into disaster. Al-Ghawrī's *mamlūk* soldiers had become mutinous and committed outrages against the civilian population of the realm, plundering their houses and abducting women, children, and dependents. Moreover, they engaged in open conflict with the troops of the local garrison, forcing the governor of Aleppo to leave the city. As a consequence, civilian refugees from Syria were pouring into Egypt. As usual, the mutinous *mamlūk*s clamored for money; they demanded a special allowance of 50 *dīnar*s each

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89   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 382. See also Petry, *Twilight* 160, 206.

90   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 381–4, 386–7, 390, 408–9, 448; v, 90. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1951–2, 1954; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 261–2, 273; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 206–7; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 323.

91   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 383–4, 395.

92   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 311; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 206. See also Petry, *Underworld* 117; Rabie, Relations 79.

93   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 393. See also Petry, *Twilight* 209.

94   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 398. Cf. for the context of this quotation and the battle of Chāldirān, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 398, 402–4. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1961; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 47–57; Allouche, *Origins*, esp. 101–2, 123–4; Brummett, *Seapower* 79–83; Clifford, Observations 247, 271–4; Fuess, Dreikampf 242, 245; Hess, Conquest 67–70; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 553; Holt, *Egypt* 36–7; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 27–9; Petry, *Twilight* 208–10; Petry, *Protectors* 24; Rabie, Relations 79–80; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 12; Stripling, *Turks* 39–40; Tansel, *Selim* 31–122; Weil, *Egypten* 405–7; Winter, Occupation 495.

before they would obey their commanders again. When their claims were not met, disorganized groups of soldiers sold their military equipment in Syria for cash and retreated to Cairo.[95]

In view of these developments, al-Ghawrī had to respond to the recent demonstration of Ottoman military strength at the battle of Chāldirān on the one hand and to the embarrassing failure of his own troops to maintain discipline even while on a simple mission within friendly territory on the other. Thus, he staged a demonstration of military strength to show that the Mamluk Sultanate was still a force to be reckoned with. In late Shawwāl 920/mid-December 1514, he began with preparations for an inspection trip to Alexandria. In the course of an extended troop review that lasted for several days, the sultan selected numerous soldiers to accompany him to Alexandria with full military equipment—in spite of the harsh wintry weather conditions. From the sultan's personal military retinue (*khāṣṣakiyya*) alone, 500 soldiers went with him to the Mediterranean port city. To this figure, we must add an unknown number of military and administrative staff, as well as ten of the highest-ranking *amīr*s of the sultanate and their personal retinue. The impressive size of the traveling party notwithstanding, the preparations for the sultan's departure were quickly finished, so that al-Ghawrī and his troops could leave Cairo in festive procession in early Dhū l-Qāʿda 920/late December 1514.[96]

It took the sultan and his retinue about three weeks to arrive at Alexandria.[97] The army entered the city in full battle gear and ready for combat, emphasizing the military character of the trip. In his description of the sultan's sojourn in the port city, Ibn Iyās noted again its desolation, blaming the city's demise on the "injustice of the local governor and oppression of the tax collectors (*qubbāḍ*) [...] [who] hindered the merchants from Europe and the Maghrib from entering the harbor."[98] However, al-Ghawrī's main focus during his time in Alexandria was not on the economic situation of the city or its financial administration, but on its defensive preparedness in general and the state of its fortifications in particular, which he carefully inspected. Having tested the readiness of the city's garrison for battle, he left Alexandria after a stay of just two days and headed back to Cairo.[99] The sultan's return was celeb-

95 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 400–1, 432, 436–7, 448. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 404, 411–2, 443, 447; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 382; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 265, 269–70; also Petry, *Twilight* 210; Petry, *Protectors* 76–7; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 134–6.

96 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 412–5. See also Petry, *Twilight* 190–2.

97 For the route, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 423.

98 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 424.

99 Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 423–6. See also Petry, *Twilight* 192–3; Pardines, Fortifications 34–5.

rated as lavishly as his departure had been: 180 bedecked horses and several elephants were led through the decorated streets of the capital when the sultan and his troops—again fully armed and ready for battle—entered the city in an elaborate procession that represented a large-scale courtly event of great communicative significance.[100]

The Mamluk demonstrations of military strength were motivated by serious issues; these were corroborated when an Ottoman envoy arrived in Cairo in Muḥarram 921/February 1515 with a message from Sultan Selīm concerning the dynasty of the Banū Dhū l-Ghādir. This Turkmen family had ruled over a small principality in southeastern Anatolia from the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century. More often than not, it had accepted the Mamluk rulers as overlords, and for their part, the Mamluks recognized the strategic importance of the principality as a buffer between their realm and the expanding Ottoman and Safawid Empires. For decades, the Banū Dhū l-Ghādir had also maintained friendly relations with the rulers of Istanbul, forming alliances with them in times of military conflicts. These good relations, however, were severely strained when ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla, the head of the dynasty, not only refused to assist Sultan Selīm in his campaign against the Safawids in 920/1514, but also interfered with the support lines of the Ottoman army. The Ottoman envoy now brought a message to Cairo about Selīm's reaction to this behavior: The Ottoman sultan had sided with a rival pretender to the Dhū l-Ghādir throne and supported him against the recalcitrant ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla. Al-Ghawrī was not willing to accept this Ottoman intervention into the internal affairs of a principality that he considered to be under his suzerainty. However, he feared a direct confrontation with Selīm, especially given the recent Mamluk military disaster at Aleppo. Thus, he merely sent a note of protest to the Ottoman sultan and dispatched a group of *amīr*s to northern Syria to gather information about the current situation in Anatolia.[101]

Al-Ghawrī's reluctance to risk open conflict with the Ottoman Empire sealed ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla's fate. Soon after the arrival of the Ottoman envoy, rumors spread in Cairo that Ottoman troops had attacked the Dhū l-Ghādir principality and brought it under indirect Ottoman rule. The defeated ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla had retreated to one of his castles.[102] When one of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla's messengers arrived

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100   Cf. on the sultan's return to Cairo, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 416–23. See also Petry, *Twilight* 193–5; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 266; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 208.

101   Cf. on the envoy and al-Ghawrī's reaction to his message, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 435–6, 438; and on the Dhū l-Ghādir principality, cf. Clifford, Observations 251; Mordtmann and Ménage, D̲h̲u ʾl-Ḳadr, 239–40. See also Jansky, Eroberung 180–1; Petry, *Twilight* 210; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 136–7; Muslu, *Ottomans* 8; Venzke, Case; Yinanç, *Dulkadir Beyliği*.

102   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 435.

in Cairo to confirm the rumors and ask for help, he was treated with friendliness but not given a pledge of tangible support.[103] Subsequently, the Ottomans intensified their efforts to capture ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla. In Jumādā I 921/June 1515, Ibn Iyās learned of unconfirmed reports that the former ruler of the Dhū l-Ghādir principality had died in combat with Ottoman troops.[104] These reports were verified one month later, when an Ottoman envoy brought the severed heads of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla, his son, and his vizier to Cairo. Al-Ghawrī reacted to this blatant provocation by having the heads properly buried as befitting the corpses of Muslim co-religionists.[105]

This outcome of the Dhū l-Ghādir crisis had severe consequences for the Mamluk Sultanate and its ruler al-Ghawrī. The Mamluks had not only lost an important buffer principality between their borders and their rising northern neighbor, but had also demonstrated that they were unwilling or unable to check Ottoman expansionist activities in their direct sphere of influence. Moreover, it had become clear that Sultan Selīm's intentions went beyond warfare against his Safawid Shiʿi adversary. In light of the aggression against one of his clients, al-Ghawrī's initial doubts about Sultan Selīm's schemes grew into full-fledged distrust. Anxious about future Ottoman military activities in the region, he had sent an envoy to Selīm even before ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla had been killed. According to Ibn Iyās, the Mamluk representative was ordered to investigate whether the Ottomans had plans to attack the Mamluk realm directly.[106]

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103 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 437–8.

104 Cf. for ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla's last months and his death, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 446, 458–9. On the conquest of his territory, see also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1983–4; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 272; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 465–6; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 323; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 384; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 4ʳ–4ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 23–4; al-Ishbīlī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 6. For Ottoman accounts of the events, see, e.g., Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 259–71; Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 407–10; Hadîdî, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osman* 396–8; Luṭfī Paşa, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i ʿOs̠mān* 240; Şükrî-i Bitlisî, *Selîm-nâme* 206–12. Moreover, see Allouche, *Origins* 123–4; Clifford, Observations 270–1; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 553; Jansky, Eroberung 182–3; Mordtmann and Ménage, Dhu 'l-Ḳadr 240; Petry, *Twilight* 210–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 137–9; Tansel, *Selim* 103–7; Venzke, Case 432–3; Weil, *Egypten* 406, 408; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 632–3; Yinanç, *Dulkadir Beyliği* 96–9.

105 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 462. See also Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fol. 4ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 24; Allouche, *Origins* 125; Jansky, Eroberung 182; Kerslake, Correspondence 222; Petry, *Twilight* 213. For the letter sent together with the heads, see Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 411–3; Kerslake, Correspondence 221–2; Muslu, *Ottomans* 177–8.

106 Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 445 (first mission). Cf. for the consequences of the Ottoman conquest of the Dhū l-Ghādir principality, Holt, *Egypt* 37; Winter, Occupation 495. See also Clifford, Observations 277; Jansky, Eroberung 182–3; Petry, *Twilight* 213–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 139. On the sultan's anxiety, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 446, 458–9, 462–3, 465–6.

Al-Ghawrī's anxiety and the fears of his subordinates were not unfounded. When the envoy finally returned to Cairo in Shaʿbān 921/September 1515 after an absence of several months, he reported that the Ottoman sultan had imprisoned him and several times threatened to execute him. Nevertheless, he had been able to gather information about an armed Ottoman fleet that was purportedly preparing an attack on Egypt's northern coastal cities, while a part of the Ottoman ground forces was allegedly marching in the direction of northern Syria. According to Ibn Iyās, the Ottomans were willing to confront the Mamluks directly at this particular point in time because they had received detailed information about the internal affairs of Egypt and its defensive preparations from a Mamluk official named Khushqadam who had deserted to join the Ottoman side.[107]

Al-Ghawrī and his highest *amīr*s reacted to this startling news by pledging their mutual loyalty to each other.[108] This act of mutual reassurance should be seen in the context of the harm done by the defector Khushqadam. Subsequently, the Mamluk army was put on alert and ordered to prepare for an expedition to Syria. Cairo was set astir by this news, especially since the *mamlūk*s had begun to obtain their travel necessities by plundering the civilian population. Moreover, the sultan decided that the fortifications of the northern Egyptian port cities should be made ready for battle. The seriousness of the situation was demonstrated by the fact that some of the sultan's *amīr*s, and even al-Ghawrī himself traveled in great haste to Alexandria and Rosetta to oversee the preparations.[109]

In spite of the unprecedented danger of a large-scale Ottoman attack, al-Ghawrī could not rely on the loyalty of his army. In late Shawwāl 921/early December 1515, the sultan's own *mamlūk*s caused great havoc in the citadel. They demanded, inter alia, that the compulsory charges and monthly levies (*mushāhara*) imposed on merchants who traded in the army's daily necessities be canceled, to lower the price of retail goods. Moreover, they called for the removal of several unpopular government officials. When the sultan did not agree to their demands, they hindered him from entering the central courtyard of the citadel and began to throw stones at him, thereby driving him out of the citadel. Al-Ghawrī then retreated to the Nile island of al-Rawḍa. When

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107   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 471–2. On this deserter, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 449–50. See also
         Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1984; Fuess, Dreikampf 243; Jansky, Eroberung 184–
         91, 205–8; Petry, *Twilight* 211–2; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 137–9; Weil, *Egypten* 411.

108   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 471.

109   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 473–6. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 479, 483; v, 14–5, 39; Ibn Fahd al-
         Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 2014; Petry, *Twilight* 214–5; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 143.

the highest *amīr*s came to meet him there in order to discuss the situation, he informed them that he was going to resign in light of the *mamlūk*s' behavior. The latter had, in the meantime, begun to loot the markets close to the citadel. Fearing the chaos that would result from the sultan's abdication, the *amīr*s went to great lengths to change al-Ghawrī's mind. Finally, the ruler yielded to their pleas and began to negotiate with representatives of the mutinous *mamlūk*s. The sultan agreed to all of the *mamlūk*s' demands, and for their part, they promised to obey their master's commands. However, once the soldiers had returned peacefully to their barracks, al-Ghawrī announced that everything was to remain as it had been and that he was not going to implement the steps agreed upon with the *mamlūk*s. Although people feared an immediate outbreak of new turmoil, this time the soldiers remained calm. Maximum prices for their daily necessities had been imposed on the traders of Cairo and measures had been taken to ensure that the *mamlūk*s would receive their overdue meat rations and other support they were entitled to.[110]

As soon as the soldiers had received their due, they were given orders to prepare for a general troop review to be held in early Ṣafar 922/March 1516. Al-Ghawrī had decided to lead his army to Aleppo in order to protect the northern frontier of the sultanate from an imminent Ottoman attack. The special character of this campaign became clear to everyone when the ʿAbbasid caliph and the four chief judges were commanded to accompany the sultan on the march to Syria. To secure general—and possibly divine—support for his reign in these troubled times, the sultan abolished numerous uncanonical tolls, compulsory charges, monthly levies, and weekly taxes.[111]

Even before the army was ready to leave Egypt for Syria, an envoy from the governor of Aleppo arrived in late Ṣafar/early April with a message that likely sparked hope in the minds of al-Ghawrī and his *amīr*s: The Safawid ruler Shāh Ismāʿīl had mustered a large army and was attacking the southeastern flank of the Ottoman realm. The leaders of the sultanate decided that in spite of this new development, the sultan should march with the army to Aleppo as planned, wait there for the outcome of the Ottoman-Safawid confrontation, and fight any troops who tried to invade Mamluk territory.[112]

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110 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 483–7; v, 6–9, 13, 15. See also Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552; Mostafa, Beiträge 222; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 64–6.

111 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 14–5, 17–9. See also Jansky, Eroberung 192–5; Petry, *Twilight* 215; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 140–2; Weil, *Egypten* 409; Winter, Occupation 495. For a letter of protest sent by al-Ghawrī to Selīm in Ṣafar 922/March 1516, see Edhem (ed.), Bir veṣīḳa; Kerslake, Correspondence 219, 222–3; Sobernheim and Kafesoğlu, Kansu 164.

112 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 22. See also Petry, *Twilight* 215–6.

The preparations for the campaign to Syria proceeded comparatively swiftly[113] and in mid-Rabīʿ II 922/May 1516, al-Ghawrī departed from Cairo in a solemn procession to lead his army to Syria. He left the affairs of Egypt in the hands of his nephew Ṭūmānbāy, who acted as his uncle's deputy during the latter's absence. In addition to numerous leading civilian and religious officials, such as the ʿAbbasid caliph and the four chief judges, the sultan's expeditionary force consisted of almost all the armed men available in Egypt. It is said that the sultan's *mamlūk*s who accompanied him from Cairo numbered about 5,000. To them, we must add approximately 1,000 *mamlūk*s belonging to the *amīr*s.[114]

Although Sultan Selīm did his best to convince al-Ghawrī of his good intentions by sending him friendly and even somewhat deferential messages,[115] the Mamluk army continued its march to Syria.[116] Its main battle force reached Damascus in mid-Jumādā I 922/June 1516 and entered the city in a solemn procession.[117] After a rest of several days, the Mamluk host headed for Aleppo via Homs and Hama.[118] Having arrived in Aleppo on 10 Jumādā II 922/11 July 1516, al-Ghawrī received messengers from Sultan Selīm, who brought gifts and

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113   Cf. on these preparations, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 21–4, 27–38. See also Jansky, Eroberung 193–6; Petry, *Twilight* 216–8.

114   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 24, 38–46, 61, 97–8. See al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 2028–9; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 282; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 323–4; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 7; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 4ᵛ–5ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 13; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 7; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-G̲h̲awrī 553; Jansky, Eroberung 196–9; Petry, *Twilight* 218–9; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 143–50; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 772; Weil, *Egypten* 410–1; Winter, Occupation 496.

115   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 45. See also Jansky, Eroberung 198; Petry, *Twilight* 220; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 150–2; Weil, *Egypten* 409; Winter, Occupation 496.

116   Cf. for events on the march to Syria, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 47–8, 51–2, 61, 67, 86. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 324; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fol. 5ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 16; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 325; Jansky, Eroberung 199–200; Petry, *Twilight* 220–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 152; Weil, *Egypten* 411–2.

117   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 53, 62, 98. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 283–4; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 211–3; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 9–17; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 324; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 325; Weil, *Egypten* 412; Jansky, Eroberung 200–1; Petry, *Twilight* 221; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 152; Winter, Occupation 497.

118   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 53–4, 62. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 295; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 283–4; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 213; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 17–20; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 324; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 325; Jansky, Eroberung 201; Petry, *Twilight* 221; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 153; Weil, *Egypten* 412.

again tried to convince the Mamluk ruler of the Ottomans' friendly intentions. According to the letter from Selīm the messengers brought with them, the Ottoman ruler's only goal was to fight Shāh Ismāʿīl, since Ottoman scholars had condemned the latter in their legal opinions (*fatāwā*). Selīm asked al-Ghawrī not to interfere in the Ottoman-Safawid conflict.[119]

In turn, al-Ghawrī dispatched one of his *amīr*s to the Ottoman camp with a message to reconcile all the conflicting parties. The outcome of this diplomatic mission, however, rendered all hopes for peace void: Sultan Selīm, no longer concealing his true intentions, insulted the Mamluk envoy, abused him, and had him put in irons. Allegedly, he was even close to killing the unfortunate *amīr*. At the same time, the Ottoman army began its invasion into Mamluk territory, occupying strategically important border castles on its march toward Syria. After receiving this news, al-Ghawrī ordered his host to leave Aleppo in order to confront the Ottoman invasion forces.[120]

Ibn Iyās recorded that in Shaʿbān 922/September 1516, rumors spread in Cairo about a "great catastrophe that deluged the land, covered it completely

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119 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 60–1, 86, 98. For the letter, see Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 425–6; Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 287–94; Jansky, Eroberung 190; Kerslake, Correspondence 223–6; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 154–5. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 296; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 51–3; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 285; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 324; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fol. 6ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 25–6; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 325–6. On Mamluk-Ottoman diplomatic relations at the time, see also Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 423–5; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 553; Jansky, Eroberung 190–1, 201–2, 205; Kerslake, Correspondence 223, 228–9; Petry, *Twilight* 222; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 153; Weil, *Egypten* 409–10, 412; Winter, Occupation 497. On the sultan's sojourn in Aleppo, see also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i.2, 1051; ii.1 52; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 62–5, 67; Jansky, Eroberung 208–9; Petry, *Twilight* 221–3; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 153–4; Weil, *Egypten* 412–3.
120 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 63–4, 68, 86–7. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 296; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 53–4; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 285; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 23; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 324; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 6ʳ–7ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 26–30; al-Ishbīlī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 8; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 326; Luṭfī Paşa, *Tevārīḥ-i Āl-i ʿOs̱mān* 246–8; Maṭrakçı Naṣūḥ, *Tevārīḥ-i Āl-i ʿOs̱mān*, fols. 176ᵛ–177ᵛ [partial trans. in Forrer (trans.), *Chronik* 46–7]; Jansky, Eroberung 205–15; Petry, *Twilight* 223–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 155–7; Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh 772; Weil, *Egypten* 410, 413; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 633; Winter, Occupation 497; and (notably different) Stripling, *Turks* 42–5. For the Ottoman declaration of war, see Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 426–7; Jansky, Eroberung 211; Kerslake, Correspondence 229–30. On implausible Ottoman claims, brought forth, e.g., in Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 279, 282, that the Mamluks had formed a secret alliance with the Safawids, see, e.g., Clifford, Observations 272–4; Fuess, Dreikampf 242; Fuess, Ġazwah 280; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 43; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 223–4, 226; Winter, Occupation 495–7; Mauder, Head; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 133.

and made it tremble":[121] The Mamluk army, which consisted almost exclus-
ively of mounted units traditionally armed with bows and lances, clashed with
the Ottoman forces at Marj Dābiq north of Aleppo. The latter were equipped
with both handguns and cannons. At first, the Mamluk cavalry seemed to
win the day, seizing parts of the Ottoman field artillery and allegedly killing
thousands of their opponents. Yet, when the *mamlūk*s of al-Ghawrī's prede-
cessors (*al-mamālīk al-qarāniṣa*) noticed that the sultan left them to bear the
brunt of the battle and spared his own *mamlūk*s,[122] their fighting spirit waned.
The right wing of the Mamluk cavalry battle formation collapsed after its
commander had been killed, and the left wing withdrew under the leader-
ship of the *amīr* Khāʾir Bak (d. 928/1522), who had secretly sided with Sultan
Selīm.[123]

In this desperate situation, al-Ghawrī tried to restore the morale of his army;
nevertheless, the Mamluk battle line disintegrated. Thereupon, "an unquench-
able burning ember burst forth in [the sultan's] heart."[124] One of the sultan's
*amīr*s, who realized that the day was lost for the Mamluk forces, urged the
sultan to flee to Aleppo. But al-Ghawrī had suffered a stroke (*khalṭ*)[125] that para-
lyzed half of his body. With his last strength, the sultan drank some water and
turned his horse to flight. At that point, the ruler of the Mamluk Sultanate fell to

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121 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 67.

122 On al-Ghawrī's earlier discrimination against the *qarāniṣa mamlūk*s, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*
     iv, 444, 446, 448, 453; v, 63. Moreover, see Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 7ᵛ–9ʳ; Ibn
     Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 30, 33, 35; Mostafa, Beiträge 221; Petry, *Twilight* 189; Salīm, *al-
     Ghūrī* 154.

123 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 68–9, 87, 99–100; Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 553. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-
     Kawākib* i, 297; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 54; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii,
     286; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 935–6; Ibn
     Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 213–4; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i,
     325; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 23–4; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 8ʳ–10ʳ;
     Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 31–6; al-Ishbīlī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 9; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām*
     iii, 243; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 326; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 160–1; Celâl-
     zâde, *Selim-nâme* 298–303; Hadîdî, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman* 406–7; Luṭfî Paşa, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i
     ʿOsmān* 249–51; Maṭrakçı Naṣūḥ, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i ʿOsmān*, fols. 177ᵛ–178ᵛ [partial trans. in
     Forrer (trans.), *Chronik* 47–9]; Şükrî-i Bitlisî, *Selîm-nâme* 250–9; Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt
     üs-selāṭīn* i, 451 [partial trans. in Edhem (trans.), *Tagebuch* 14], 479–80; Fuess, Janissaires
     215–6; Fuess, Fini 407–10; Fuess, Dreikampf 243–4; Holt, Khāʾir Beg 524; Jansky, Eroberung
     199–200, 215–20, 226, 235–7; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 1–7; Mostafa, Beiträge 206, 222–3; Najīb,
     al-Istiʿdādāt 314–5; Petry, *Twilight* 224–6; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 57–8, 157–60; Weil, *Egypten* 413–4,
     416; Winter, Occupation 496, 498–9.

124 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 70.

125 I owe this translation to Schimmel, in Ibn Iyās, *Alltagsnotizen* 211.

the ground and died within a few minutes "due to the strength of his wrath."[126] His body was never found.[127]

Al-Ghawrī's death not only sealed the defeat of the Mamluk troops in the battle of Marj Dābiq,[128] but also heralded the downfall of the Mamluk Sultanate. Syria now lay open to Ottoman occupation, and although Ṭūmānbāy, who was proclaimed Mamluk ruler after his uncle's death,[129] did his best to defend Egypt against the advancing Ottoman forces, his efforts came to nothing. In late 922 to early 923/early 1517, Ottoman forces conquered Egypt. When Selīm arrested and executed the fugitive Ṭūmānbāy soon thereafter, the Mamluk Sultanate had ceased to exist as an independent polity. Khā'ir Bak, the Mamluk *amīr* who had deserted al-Ghawrī's forces at the battle of Marj Dābiq, was made Ottoman viceroy of Egypt.[130]

126   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 70.

127   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 69–71, 87. See also Jansky, Eroberung 220–1. On al-Ghawrī's death, see, e.g., al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 297; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 54–5; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 287; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 70, 99–101; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 936; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā* 214; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mut'at al-adhhān* i, 325; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 24; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 9; al-Nahrawālī, *al-I'lām* iii, 240, 243; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 10ʳ–10ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqi'at al-Sulṭān* 36–7; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 326–7; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 161; Jansky, Eroberung 221–4; Petry, *Twilight* 226–7; Petry, *Protectors* 25; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 160–2. For rumors that al-Ghawrī had survived, see al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 64; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 250.

128   Cf. for the outcome of the battle, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 70–2, 77–9, 87. See also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 55; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 286–8; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā* 214; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 24–7; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 10ᵛ–12ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqi'at al-Sulṭān* 37–41; Jansky, Eroberung 223–5; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 7–9; Petry, *Twilight* 227–31; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 162–4; Weil, *Egypten* 414–5.

129   Cf. on Ṭūmānbāy's ascension to the throne, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 85–6, 102–5. See also Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 306; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 291; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 936–7; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā* 219; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 35; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 13ᵛ–14ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqi'at al-Sulṭān* 48–9; Luṭfī Paşa, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i ʿOṣmān* 252; Holt, Ṭūmān Bāy 622; Jansky, Eroberung 229–32; Petry, *Twilight* 230–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 165–70; Winter, Occupation 500–1.

130   Cf. on the conquest of the Mamluk territories, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 73–7, 84–7, 102, 105–7, 111–2, 116–9, 122–209. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 297; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 288–95; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 115; Ibn Sibāṭ, *Ṣidq al-akhbār* ii, 937–9; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 25–6, 28–44, 58–61, 66; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā* 214–5, 219–3; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 12ᵛ–85ʳ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqi'at al-Sulṭān* 41, 43, 49–209; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 10–5; al-Nahrawālī, *al-I'lām* iii, 243–4; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 327; Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 303–36; Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşe'āt üs-selāṭīn* i, 451–5 [partial trans. in Edhem (trans.), *Tagebuch* 14–26], 480–92; Hadîdî, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman* 407–19; Luṭfī Paşa, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i ʿOṣmān* 251–76; Maṭraḳçı Naṣūḥ, *Tevārīh-i Āl-i ʿOṣmān*, fols. 178ᵛ–184ᵛ [partial trans. in Forrer (trans.), *Chronik* 49–55]; Şükrî-i Bitlisî, *Selîm-nâme*

Although rich in detail, Ibn Iyās' account that I have summarized here leaves readers with numerous open questions and unsolved problems. Some of these relate to Ibn Iyās' own position vis-à-vis the events he describes: Can we use the account of a person negatively affected by the sultan's financial policies for an unbiased understanding of this aspect of al-Ghawrī's actions? Moreover, did Ibn Iyās, who was not part of the sultan's court society, have access to all the data needed for a comprehensive assessment of the sultan's reign?

Yet, the information that our chronicler provides also raises new questions, for example, questions related to the economic transformations the Mamluk Sultanate went through during its last years. How severe were the economic problems of the realm, and what were their causes? Do the explanatory models offered by Ibn Iyās—the Portuguese interference with the Mamluks' long-distance trade on the one hand, and the greed and injustice of al-Ghawrī and his officials on the other—accurately and sufficiently explain Egypt's waning position in the transregional exchange of goods? How can we make sense of the sultan's attempts to deal with this situation by way of confiscations, compulsory charges, and special levies? Were these fiscal measures short-term expedients, or part of a larger strategy? How did the ramifications of the economic situation affect cultural and intellectual life in the sultanate?

Other questions pertain to the internal political and military state of the sultanate. How can we understand al-Ghawrī's reactions to the internal challenges he encountered, such as the recurring military mutinies? How important were his military reforms and the establishment of new armed units?

Another set of questions centers on al-Ghawrī's interactions with actors outside his realm. Why was he hesitant to react to threats posed by other political entities in general and the Ottoman Empire in particular? Was the defeat the Mamluks suffered at the hands of the Ottomans inevitable, or might the sultan have warded it off if he had taken a more prudent course? Were al-Ghawrī's military and diplomatic activities his only reactions to the external threats he encountered? And, more generally: Was al-Ghawrī's behavior typical for a late Mamluk ruler, or did he pursue novel strategies with regard to the internal affairs of the sultanate and its external relations?

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259–89; Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 427–45; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 44–7; Haarmann, Miṣr 176–7; Holt Ṭūmān Bāy 622; Jansky, Eroberung 225–9, 232–3, 235–41; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 9–20; Massé, Sélim Iᵉʳ; Philipp, Impact; Winter, Occupation 499–513; Stripling, *Turks* 52–7. On the consequences of the conquest, see, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment*; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 634–6; Winter, *Society*; Lellouch, *Ottomans*; Lellouch and Michel (eds.), *Conquête*.

Many of these questions that arise from Ibn Iyās' account have occupied historians for more than a century. The following sections outline their answers and review previous scholarship on al-Ghawrī's reign, in order to provide readers who are not familiar with the field of Mamluk studies with an introduction to the development of research about al-Ghawrī and his time that is necessary to properly contextualize the findings of the present monograph. Concomitantly, these sections point to the challenges, blind spots, and problems that mark the present state of the field, and that any in-depth analysis of the Mamluk Sultanate under al-Ghawrī must tackle if it seeks to avoid earlier shortcomings and present a substantial and meaningful reinterpretation of this period of Islamicate history.

2.2   State of Research

2.2.1   *Political and Economic Developments during al-Ghawrī's Reign*
Al-Ghawrī's reign is often seen as a period of special importance in Near Eastern history, as its end heralded the transition from Mamluk to Ottoman preeminence in the Arab lands. Many authors call the events of 922–3/1516–7 a "turning point"[131] or "watershed"[132] and thus note their "epochal significance."[133] Accordingly, there is a sizable body of research on the political history of al-Ghawrī's days, which, however, relies mostly on an extremely limited number of sources and methodological approaches and therefore often arrives at similar findings.

Typical examples of early scholarship on al-Ghawrī's reign include the second volume of Gustav Weil's *Geschichte des Abbasidenchalifats in Egypten* (1862) and William Muir's *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt, 1260–1517 A.D.* (1896), which is almost completely based on Weil's work. The two authors largely relied on Ibn Iyās' chronicle and present a restructured paraphrase of the latter's observations, conclusions, and moralistic judgments.[134] They explain many of the sultan's fiscal measures on moral grounds, linking them

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131   E.g., Behrens-Abouseif, Ottoman Conquest 303; Clifford, Observations 245; Philipp, Impact 104.
132   Hirschler, Studying 163.
133   Berkey, *Formation* 261. For similar views, see also, e.g., Fuess, Fini 401; Heinrichs, Einführung 15; Hess, Conquest 55–7, 75–6; Humphreys, World System 445; Weintritt, Concepts 189. But see also Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 87; Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 127; Conermann and Şen, Introduction, esp. 13–20; Bauer, *Mittelalter* 154–5.
134   Muir explicitly notes the problem of sources, cf. Muir, *Dynasty* 187.

to what Weil calls the ruler's "passion for grandeur."[135] However, like many subsequent historians, Weil and Muir primarily focus not on the internal affairs of the Mamluk Sultanate, but on its foreign policy. Here, both authors concentrate their attention, inter alia, on the armed conflicts triggered by the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean,[136] which Weil interpreted mainly as the result of the Muslims' "religious hatred."[137] Moreover, both authors offered detailed discussions of the Mamluk-Ottoman military conflict, its background, and its consequences.[138] In Weil's view, the main reason for the outbreak of hostilities between the two Sunni sultanates was the rise of the Safawid Empire, which forced the Ottoman Sultan Selīm to invade Mamluk Syria in order to improve his strategic position vis-à-vis Shāh Ismāʿīl. Old and war-weary, al-Ghawrī missed the right moment to side with the Safawids and counter the Ottoman expansionist schemes with a preventative strike.[139] When the Mamluks finally confronted the Ottomans on the battlefield, they were both outnumbered and outgunned.[140]

As the first modern authors to discuss this period of Mamluk history, the works of Weil and Muir have been points of reference for subsequent scholars for more than a century. Their focus on the sultan's foreign policy and especially his military activities was paradigmatic for most of what has been written about the political history of al-Ghawrī's reign ever since. Similarly, their reliance on Ibn Iyās' chronicle as their main and almost exclusive source of information has remained the scholarly standard well into recent times.

This trend to see Ibn Iyās as the primary or even the only authority on late Mamluk history worth citing was reinforced by publications that made the work easily accessible to broader readerships. In 1921, W.H. Salmon published an English translation of parts of *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* dealing with the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. Gaston Wiet thereafter rendered the sections of the chronicle about the events from 872/1468 to 928/1522 into French (1945, 1955–60) and Annemarie Schimmel published a partial German translation of Ibn Iyās' account of al-Ghawrī's reign (1985).

With regard to early secondary studies on al-Ghawrī's reign, M. Meyerhof's often neglected article "Die Augenkrankheit eines ägyptischen Sultans 1513 n. Chr." (1919) deserves special attention since it opened up a new perspective on

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135   Weil, *Egypten* 389. Cf. Muir, *Dynasty* 189–90.
136   Muir, *Dynasty* 191–2; Weil, *Egypten* 391–8.
137   Weil, *Egypten* 393.
138   Muir, *Dynasty* 192–200; Weil, *Egypten* 399–416.
139   Weil, *Egypten* 407–8. See also Muir, *Dynasty* 196.
140   Weil, *Egypten* 414; Muir, *Dynasty* 199.

a previously understudied aspect of the sultan's biography. In this short article, Meyerhof identifies the eye disease from which the sultan suffered in 919/1513 as trachoma, an infection common in Egypt.[141]

Apart from Meyerhof's study, most scholarly works addressing al-Ghawrī's reign published between 1900 and the mid-1960s were limited to discussions of the military conflicts of the Mamluks with the Portuguese and the Ottomans, and are generally just a paraphrase of the sources already used by Weil and Muir.[142] A noteworthy exception is Herbert Jansky's comprehensive article "Die Eroberung Syriens durch Sultan Selim I." (1926). Focusing exclusively on the first step of the Ottoman campaign against the Mamluk Sultanate, Jansky collected a large amount of data from a multitude of Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and European sources, some of which have remained unpublished to the present day.[143] Thus, he was able to describe the military events and their political context in unprecedented detail and present a nuanced picture of the last days of Mamluk Syria, including a thorough analysis of the embassies exchanged between the conflicting parties and background information on the Ottoman campaign plans and war preparations.[144] In Jansky's view, the military conflict between Ottomans and Mamluks was inevitable, as "the Eastern Mediterranean Basin does not provide enough space for two major powers."[145] Moreover, he considered the Mamluk Sultanate fatally weakened by internal discord and al-Ghawrī's greed.[146] Jansky further agreed with Weil that al-Ghawrī had made a crucial strategic mistake when he did not side with the Safawids against Selīm's forces during the conflict of 920/1514.[147] The author explained the outcome of the battle of Marj Dābiq by citing the Ottomans' numerical and technological superiority, al-Ghawrī's tactical mistake of holding back his own *mamlūk*s, and Khā'ir Bak's desertion.[148]

Jansky and others emphasized the importance of firearms during the Mamluk-Ottoman war. As shown above, al-Ghawrī was eager to increase the number of cannons and handguns available to the Mamluk military and establish new bodies of troops armed with these weapons. David Ayalon studied these

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141   Meyerhof, Augenkrankheit 288–90.
142   E.g., Sobernheim, Ḳānṣūh; Sobernheim and Kafesoğlu, Kansu; Mostafa, Beiträge.
143   Cf. Jansky, Eroberung 173–7. See also Jansky, Chronik 29–33; Jansky, Beiträge.
144   E.g., Jansky, Eroberung 184–92, 198, 201–7, 209–12, 214, 235–7. Jansky revisited the topic in Jansky, Chronik. For an account of the Ottoman conquest based partially on Jansky, see Stripling, *Turks* 39–48.
145   Jansky, Eroberung 178.
146   Jansky, Eroberung 179.
147   Jansky, Eroberung 180, 184.
148   Jansky, Eroberung 218–20.

developments in his monograph *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk King-dom* (1956), which was among the first publications to ask whether and to what extent al-Ghawrī's actions could be considered innovative. According to Ayalon, the increased use of firearms in the armed forces of the sultanate during al-Ghawrī's reign did not constitute a profound change in Mamluk military customs. The author acknowledged that al-Ghawrī intensified the casting of cannons and thus contributed to the proliferation of a weapon the Mamluks had previously used only rarely.[149] Moreover, he also discussed how the sultan set up a new infantry unit armed with handguns, known as the Fifth Corps.[150] Yet in Ayalon's interpretation, the sultan did not opt for a fundamental reorganization of the army, but in his military policy he focused first and foremost on reviving the tradition of Mamluk cavalry warfare or *furūsiyya*[151] by constructing exercise grounds and increasing training. This cavalry tradition had not only been the backbone of Mamluk military supremacy for centuries, but was also one of the mainstays of the Mamluk social system. In Ayalon's view, a widespread esteem for cavalry warfare and general contempt for firearms characterized what he called "Mamluk military society and its psychology."[152] He argued that such an attitude precluded a widespread introduction of cannons and handguns in the Mamluk army—an assumption refuted by more recent scholarship.[153] The sultan's esteem of traditional cavalry warfare was, in Ayalon's view, also corroborated by the fact that the Mamluk army made almost no use of firearms at Marj Dābiq. Thus, to Ayalon, al-Ghawrī was a profoundly conservative ruler in military matters.[154]

The period after World War II saw a growing interest in the economic history of the Islamicate middle period. With regard to al-Ghawrī's tenure, economic historians were particularly concerned with understanding the influence of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean on Mamluk trade relations. Earlier studies, following Ibn Iyās, had championed a monocausal view according to which a perceived economic crisis of the Mamluk realm was the direct result of Portuguese interference with Mamluk maritime trade routes.[155] In contrast,

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149   Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 48–51.
150   Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 59–77.
151   On this term, see, e.g., al-Sarraf, Literature 144, 146; Ayalon, Notes 34.
152   Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 58.
153   Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 47, 80–3, 88, 90–2, 95–6; and for refutations, see Fuess, Janissaires, esp. 216–19; Irwin, Gunpowder, esp. 128, 132–7. For al-Ghawrī's efforts to revive his troops' *furūsiyya* skills, see also Ayalon, Notes 45–6, 51–3, 55.
154   Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 49, 51–8, 77, 80–1, 87–92.
155   E.g., Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* iii, xliii, li; Stripling, *Turks* 26–36. See also Garcin, Regime 297–8, 316.

Subhi Labib (1965) argued that the inability of the Mamluks and the Venetians, their most important Christian trading partner, to form a strong alliance against their rivals in order to retain control over the spice trade played a key role in explaining the decline of the sultanate's economic and military situation.[156]

Abraham Udovitch demonstrated in his article "England to Egypt, 1350–1500: Long-Term Trends and Long-Distance Trade" (published jointly with R. Lopez and H. Miskimin in 1970) a considerable decline of Egyptian agriculture, industry, and commerce in late Mamluk times. He explained this, inter alia, in relation to the significant reduction of the Egyptian labor force caused by recurring outbreaks of plague that in turn resulted in over-taxation of the remaining population. Others factors reinforced these developments, including climatic changes, Tīmūr's (r. 771–807/1370–1405) invasion of the region, and a shortage in precious metals.[157]

In contrast to Udovitch, in 1976 Eliyahu Ashtor blamed mainly domestic political reasons for what he called the "[d]ecline under the Circassian Mamluks," a decline that he thought was connected to a "decay of the Islamic civilization in the Near East."[158] While Ashtor acknowledged the significance of recurring plague epidemics and monetary turbulence, he opined that their consequences were seriously aggravated by the ruling Mamluk elite who pressed the civilian population for money to pay for their—often purely internal—conflicts.[159] The economy was strained by a number of factors: a "technological decline"[160] of Near Eastern industries caused by the Mamluk elite's poor management and their enforcement of monopolies that eliminated any incentive for technological improvements, a drop in agricultural production caused by a lack of investments by Mamluk tax farmers, pillaging troops, and the flight of peasants trying to evade the oppression of *iqtāʿ* holders. The resulting migration into the cities contributed to the growth of urban poverty, as did forced transactions in which merchants had to buy goods from high-ranking persons at prices above market level. Furthermore, late Mamluk sultans' monopolistic regulations pushed merchants out of high-volume, profitable trade. To a cer-

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156   Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 466–80, 490–1. See also Labib, Policy 76–7.

157   Lopez, Miskimin, and Udovitch, England 94–5, 115–28. For a review of Udovitch's analysis arguing that the decline was even more severe than assumed and that domestic economic structures played a decisive role, see Borsch, Thirty.

158   Ashtor, *History* 301 (both quotations). See also, e.g., Ashtor, Decline, esp. 253, 283; Lev, History 470–2; Philipp, Impact 104–5. For similar views, see, e.g., Ayalon, Some Remarks, esp. 122–3; Har-El, *Struggle* 54–5.

159   Ashtor, *History* 301–5. See also Ashtor, Decline 284.

160   Ashtor, *History* 309.

tain degree, the economic crisis was moderated by a robust development of the Egyptian long-distant trade. Yet, even its profits were not sufficient to cover the costs of the "extravagant luxury of the feudal class"[161] and its increased military expenditures.[162]

Ashtor's work has been criticized for his unbalanced view of the Mamluk ruling elite, his uncritical application of terms from European history, his tendency to trust European sources by default more than Arabic sources, and his imperfect collection and treatment of statistical data.[163] Nevertheless, for decades his publications and especially his idea of a sweeping decline have shaped debates about the late Mamluk Sultanate and its economy and this continues to be the case to the present day.[164]

In contrast to the field of economic history, up to the end of the twentieth century, scholars have largely neglected the political history of al-Ghawrī's reign. Maḥmūd Rizq Salīm's monograph *al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī* (1966) is a noteworthy exception; but this work has been largely ignored by European and North American authors. Although Salīm used Ibn Iyās' *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* as the most important primary source of his book,[165] he nevertheless brought fresh insights to the history of the Mamluk Sultanate and was the first author to focus in detail on the sultan's domestic policy. His basic research perspective was heavily influenced by the Arab nationalism of the 1960s, a view that led him to see al-Ghawrī as a defender of "Egypt and the great Arab homeland"[166] against foreign aggressors. Ironically, this anachronistic understanding allowed him to assess the sultan's deeds in a much more balanced way than many other authors who relied primarily on Ibn Iyās.

Salīm portrays al-Ghawrī as a modest person who did not seek the throne, but, once appointed, did everything he could to put the realm in order.[167] In Salīm's view, the sultan generally followed the examples of previous Mamluk rulers and his novel measures, such as the establishment Fifth Corps, did not have a profound impact on the structure of the realm.[168]

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161   Ashtor, *History* 329.
162   Ashtor, *History* 306–21, 325–9. See also Ashtor, Decline 258–62, 270–81, 284; Lev, History 470, 472, 479–84. For a case study of technological decline, see Ashtor, Sugar; and for a recent reassessment, Sato, *Sugar*. On trade, see Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, esp. 433–512; Ashtor (ed.), *Studies*; Lev, History 472–4.
163   Irwin, Eyes 35–7.
164   Lev, History 476.
165   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 7.
166   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 7. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 4–7, 100–1, 162, 170, 194.
167   Cf. esp. Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 33, 38, 44–7, 100.
168   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 39. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 44, 63.

Salīm opined that the Portuguese interference with Egypt's long-distance trade was largely responsible for the economic problems the sultan encountered. Confronted with an empty treasury, al-Ghawrī was obliged to take all measures possible to raise the revenue necessary to run the sultanate.[169] With regard to the levies that al-Ghawrī imposed on the population, Salīm wrote: "We believe that these levies were necessary and logical for the sultan who was responsible for running the affairs of the country, guarding its security, and establishing facilities to benefit the public."[170] Salīm argued that al-Ghawrī did not waste the money he obtained from these levies, but invested it in civilian and military infrastructure and building projects.[171]

According to Salīm's understanding, al-Ghawrī's activities in the area of foreign policy were aimed exclusively at the defense of the realm and its economic activities against expansionist neighbors.[172] This included naval operations against the Portuguese presence that Salīm interpreted as "a new kind of crusader warfare and an inauspicious prologue to the colonization of the Orient."[173] Moreover, al-Ghawrī, who was, by nature, inclined toward peace and stability, was genuinely interested in establishing nonviolent relations with and between the Ottomans and the Safawids. Yet, Sultan Selīm feared that al-Ghawrī would eventually pledge allegiance to the Safawid ruler and hence attacked the Mamluks. In the subsequent war, the Mamluk forces' disunity and Khāʾir Bak's desertion were decisive for al-Ghawrī's defeat.[174]

The 1990s witnessed the publication of several studies about al-Ghawrī that brought our knowledge about this man and his time to an entirely new level. These included the seminal works of Carl F. Petry, who authored two monographs and a series of articles and book chapters about al-Ghawrī and his reign. Petry's two monographs *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāytbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (1993) and *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (1994) did not focus exclusively on al-Ghawrī's reign, but studied it in a comparative perspective together with that of his indirect predecessor Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96). Petry's analysis of al-Ghawrī's reign was primarily based on a careful reading of Ibn Iyās' chronicle. Given a lack of available alternat-

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169   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 67–71, 76–8, 83–4.
170   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 84.
171   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 86–99. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 173.
172   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 100–1, 105, 109, 114, 134.
173   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 114. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 118–9.
174   Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 125–6, 131, 159–60. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 132–4, 153.

ive sources, in Petry's view there was very little to do but acknowledge one's dependence on Ibn Iyās and use his work as critically as possible.[175]

With regard to the reasons for the Mamluk-Ottoman war that brought about al-Ghawrī's end, Petry blamed it on "fate and the ambition of [...] Ismāʿīl Ṣafawī,"[176] and on Selīm's personality. Although not distinctly different from the interpretations of previous authors, for the first time, Petry embedded this view in a broader analysis of late Mamluk foreign policy. According to Petry, the rulers of the Mamluk Sultanate were, throughout its history, eager to maintain the status quo in transregional politics: "Mamlūk foreign policy aimed, as its primary objective, at preserving stasis."[177] As the leading regional polity of their time, the Mamluks had an interest in guaranteeing regional stability. To this end, they maintained a powerful army that they deployed, however, only as a measure of last resort, preferring time-tested diplomatic solutions and nonviolent coexistence whenever possible. In general, "[n]ew ideologies of relations between states, expansive visions of imperialism, or experiments with new styles of diplomacy found minimal receptivity"[178] among the Mamluk elite.[179] Al-Ghawrī upheld these time-honored principles of Mamluk foreign policy when dealing with the Ottomans. But Selīm, irascible by nature, was not interested in preserving the status quo. Eventually, al-Ghawrī's faithfulness to the old-fashioned instruments of Mamluk foreign policy, combined with disunity on the battlefield, ended in disaster.[180]

In other fields, Petry considered al-Ghawrī much less inclined to follow traditional methods. In terms of fiscal and military politics, he characterized the sultan as a "vilified innovator"[181] who devised new strategies to secure his survival and was therefore criticized by his contemporaries.[182] Petry's insights into how and why al-Ghawrī implemented his novel military and fiscal policies have tremendously expanded our knowledge about late Mamluk history. He argued that al-Ghawrī's attempts to equip soldiers with firearms were at least partially motivated by the sultan's eagerness to establish new military units that— unlike the ever mutinous *mamlūk*s—stood outside the traditional military sys-

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175   Petry, *Twilight* 10, 12–3; Petry, *Protectors* 7, 9.

176   Petry, *Protectors* 24.

177   Petry, *Protectors* 31.

178   Petry, *Protectors* 35.

179   Petry, *Protectors* 24, 31–5. See also Petry, *Protectors* 55, 61; Petry, War 109; Petry, Institution 462–5; Petry, Innovations 441–2.

180   Petry, *Protectors* 53–5. See also Petry, War 108–9; Petry, Institution 467.

181   Petry, *Twilight* 119. See also Petry, *Twilight* 5.

182   Petry, *Twilight* 130, 234–5. See also Petry, *Protectors* 21, 190, 222, 225.

tem and were directly dependent on the ruler for the payment of their salaries, since they lacked the traditional financial privileges based on tax grants (sg. *iqtāʿ*) the *mamlūk*s enjoyed. Similarly, al-Ghawrī appointed high-ranking *amīr*s without allotting them tax grants, paying them salaries instead and thus making sure that these officers could not establish independent power bases.[183] In fiscal policy, the sultan devised numerous ways to meet the needs of his troops and to satisfy his love for luxury—a character trait Petry emphasized as Weil had done. In addition to bribes, special levies, extortions, and expropriations, al-Ghawrī set up an elaborate system of selling civilian offices to the highest bidder.[184] In Petry's view, these and similar measures entailed increased monetary burdens on the population and had a negative impact on the willingness of artisans and merchants to invest in new projects or methods of production.[185]

Yet, it is Petry's analysis of more than three hundred deeds of pious endowments (sg. *waqf*) and related documents that led to his understanding of al-Ghawrī's real financial ingenuity.[186] Petry shows that al-Ghawrī allotted a huge number of revenue producing assets to his main *waqf*, which supported his funeral complex; by doing so, these became inalienable according to Islamic law. Taken together, these assets, which often came from confiscations, forced underpriced sales, and transfers from other *waqf*s, produced an estimated annual income of about 38,000 Ashrafi *dīnār*s, while the annual expenditures of the sultan's funeral complex and its annexes amounted to only about 7 percent of this sum. As founder, al-Ghawrī could use the resulting surpluses as he pleased. Through his endowment, the ruler thus established an enormous and legally well protected "private fisc"[187] that he could dispose of freely. As Petry demonstrated, the ruler used the available means, inter alia, to satisfy the financial demands of his *mamlūk*s. Moreover, the sultan might have relied on these funds to cover, at least partially, the costs of his military innovations. If this assumption is correct, al-Ghawrī was in fact experimenting with the introduc-

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183   Petry, *Twilight* 162; Petry, *Protectors* 193–4. See also Petry, *Protectors* 190, 192–3, 195–6, 209; Petry, Institution 479–83; Petry, Innovations 447–53.

184   Petry, *Twilight* 164–8. See also Petry, *Twilight* 119, 124, 154, 169–73, 188, 190–6, 229; Petry, *Protectors* 137–40, 166, 170–3, 176; Petry, Institution 472–5; Petry, Paradox 203–6.

185   Petry, *Protectors* 102–8, 113–8, 131, 221–2.

186   Petry, *Protectors* 9–10. On *waqf* documents and other archival sources from al-Ghawrī's time, see also, e.g., Amīn, Manshūr 11–8; Amīn, *al-Awqāf, passim*; Behrens-Abouseif, Change 88–91; Ibrāhīm, al-Tawthīqāt; al-Imam, Les waqfs; El-Masry, Urkunden; al-Miṣrī, Wathīqat taghyīr 1, 8, 11–2.

187   Petry, *Protectors* 198.

tion of a new military and fiscal system that no longer relied on *iqtāʿ* funded troops, and can therefore be seen as a fundamental transformation of the institutional foundations of the Mamluk Sultanate.[188]

Petry's meticulous analysis of the available endowment deeds dating to al-Ghawrī's time represented a significant leap forward in our understanding of late Mamluk history. But apart from these documents, Petry's publications on al-Ghawrī and his time relied almost exclusively on Ibn Iyās' biased account, although other, less conveniently available sources were known at the time.[189] The fact that almost all of Petry's publications compare the records of Qāytbāy and al-Ghawrī aggravated this problem of sources, as this comparative perspective on late Mamluk history was originally introduced by Ibn Iyās' chronicle.[190] In numerous instances, Ibn Iyās measured al-Ghawrī against the standard of Qāytbāy and found the former's performance deficient when compared to his predecessor, whom he considered the last in a tradition of virtuous and able rulers.[191] By using Ibn Iyās as the basis of its comparative analysis, Petry's work inevitably reproduces, to some extent, the biased statements of his source, although we must acknowledge that Petry did his best to review them critically. The fact that Petry's studies seldom compared Ibn Iyās' statements to other sources, however, critically curtailed their potential to reach independent judgments.

As a consequence, the assessment of the penultimate Mamluk ruler that emerges in Petry's works was often very negative, therein following Ibn Iyās. *Twilight of Majesty* especially, but also other of Petry's publications, called the sultan, inter alia, "ruthless,"[192] "selfish,"[193] and as having a "penchant for con-

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188   Petry, *Protectors* 198, 201–10. See also Petry, *Protectors* 196–7; Petry, Instrument 105–9; Petry, Geniza 55, 57–8; Petry, Institution 476–8, 483–9; Petry, Innovations 453–6; Petry, Fractionalized Estates 99, 101–2, 105–15; Petry, Paradox 206. For studies of other late Mamluk *waqf*s that followed a similar logic, see Petry, *Protectors* 198–202; Petry, Estate; Petry, Geniza 55–6, 58–9; Petry, Fractionalized Estates 99–100, 102–4, 107–13. For later studies building on Petry's findings, see, e.g., Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 30–2, 87, 95–6; Daisuke, *Tenure* 83–4, 96, 106–7, 148, 174–6, 214–5 (applying Petry's findings to earlier periods as well).

189   Winter, Review 160, 162; Haarmann, Review of *Protectors* 270; Haarmann, Review of *Twilight* 636–7; Conermann, Review 356–7. Haarmann and Conermann singled out two of the main sources of the present study as works that Petry overlooked.

190   Examples of comparisons and comparative statements include Petry, *Twilight* 5, 119–23, 137–9, 152–3, 171, 181–2, 189, 233–6; Petry, *Protectors* 13, 20, 21, 26, 76, 83, 86, 92, 139, 155, 158, 163–5, 173, 224–5.

191   See, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 186, 369, 441; v, 29, 33, 37.

192   Petry, *Twilight* 124. See also Petry, *Protectors* 140.

193   Petry, *Twilight* 197.

spiracy"[194] as well as "self-aggrandizement."[195] Moreover, Petry's works describe al-Ghawrī as a "man who made oppression a high art,"[196] as "a tyrant of insatiable greed"[197] harboring "vainglorious"[198] motives, and as stricken with "paranoia,"[199] "avarice,"[200] "cynicism,"[201] and "arrogance."[202] While we cannot rule out the possibility that these characterizations were fitting descriptions of the ruler, the basis on which they were assigned was meager and might have called for a more cautious assessment.[203] In particular, the recurring statements in Petry's publications that al-Ghawrī was "obsessed with personal luxury"[204] and prone to "self-indulgence"[205] appear to be in need of review. Following Ibn Iyās, Petry's *Twilight of Majesty* explains the sultan's interest in elaborate ceremonies and refined possessions largely as the latter's personal vices.[206] The present study shows that other explanations for this behavior are at least equally possible.

Building in part on Petry's work, Francisco Javier Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta's *Pouvoir et finance en Méditerranée pré-moderne* (2009) opposed any understanding of the history of Mamluk trade based on the notion of "decline" as postulated by Ashtor and others. *Pouvoir et finance* shows that while the late Mamluk administration was active in long-distance trade, there were no signs that private agents were irrevocably excluded. Moreover, Mamluk economic policy should be seen against the background of Mamluk-Venetian relations, which suffered severely from Mamluk confiscations and extortions implemented in reaction to a decrease in tax returns that resulted from the plague. Eventually, Mamluk internal disunity and not a purported economic decline sealed the fate of the sultanate.[207] Apellániz results are part of a growing body of

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194   Petry, *Protectors* 140.

195   Petry, *Protectors* 155.

196   Petry, *Protectors* 165.

197   Petry, War 105.

198   Petry, *Protectors* 155.

199   Petry, *Twilight* 167; Petry, Innovations 445, 446; Petry, *Protectors* 21. See also Petry, *Protectors* 23.

200   Petry, *Twilight* 167; Petry, *Protectors* 156.

201   Petry, Innovations 446.

202   Petry, *Twilight* 168.

203   See also Stern, Review 1256.

204   Petry, *Twilight* 124.

205   Petry, *Twilight* 169.

206   Petry, *Protectors* 165–6, is more nuanced and mentions other motivations for al-Ghawrī's elaborate spectacles and demonstrations of luxury.

207   Apéllaniz, *Pouvoir*.

scholarship that is reinterpreting "the decline of the Mamlūk state as a period of socio-political transformation."[208] In contrast to earlier scholarship, today researchers see the various aspects of this transformation as rational reactions to economic challenges and not as the result of greed and other vices.[209]

Late Mamluk foreign policy has been the subject of unabated attention since the 1990s. Winslow Clifford (1993) offered a detailed analysis of Mamluk-Safawid interactions and shed light on the consequences of the Safawids' rise for the legitimacy of Mamluk rule and the religious allegiances of the population of the sultanate.[210] Albrecht Fuess revisited the complex question of why the Mamluks ultimately lost out to their Ottoman and Safawid rivals in his "Dreikampf um die Macht zwischen Osmanen, Mamlūken und Safawiden (1500–1517)" (2003). Echoing, in part, Petry's interpretation of al-Ghawrī's foreign policy as outdated, Fuess blamed the inflexibility of the often quite old Mamluk rulers for their failures, although he—contra Ayalon—did not negate the significance of Mamluk efforts to equip troops with firearms. In Fuess' view, the Mamluk failure to establish a powerful navy and to adjust their main battle forces to gunpowder-based state-of-the-art battle techniques were especially decisive. Moreover, late Circassian rulers faced difficulties in acquiring strategic resources, including new *mamlūk*s. These difficulties, together with the contraction of the late Mamluk economy and the vulnerability of imported *mamlūk*s to the plague, resulted in a depletion of the Mamluk military forces. Finally, intra-Mamluk quarrels tipped the scale in favor of the Ottomans at Marj Dābiq.[211]

Three recent publications have brought our knowledge of Mamluk-Ottoman relations to a new level. *Conquête ottomane de l'Égypte (1517): Arrière-plan, impact, échos* (2013) edited by Benjamin Lellouch and Nicolas Michel, and Lellouch's *Les Ottomans en Égypte: Historiens et conquérants au XVIe sciècle* (2006) shed light on the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and its impact on the country in unprecedented detail.[212] More importantly for this study, Cihan Yüksel Muslu's

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208 Lev, History 484. See also Walker, Responses 51.

209 Walker, Responses 51. For recent reinterpretations of Mamluk economic history, see Conermann, Empire 26–31.

210 See esp. Clifford, Observations. For a study revisiting some of Clifford's findings, see Mauder, Head.

211 Fuess, Dreikampf 246–9. On firearms, see also Fuess, Janissaires; on strategic resources, see Fuess, Scarcity; and for a recent reexamination of Fuess' arguments, see Fuess, Crowd. For a view doubting the military impact of the Ottoman use of firearms, see Hacker, Archery, esp. 53–4.

212 For a recent and highly innovavtive study of the background and context of the conquest, see Melvin-Koushki, Historiography.

The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World (2014) is a detailed analysis of the diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the Mamluks up to the year 918/1512. Criticizing earlier scholarship that perceived the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk realm as the logical outcome of Ottoman-Mamluk relations,[213] Muslu describes in detail the complicated process of growing Ottoman self-assertion in their diplomatic exchanges with the Mamluks.[214] In the present author's understanding, Muslu's conclusions on the dynamic and changing character of Mamluk-Ottoman relations cast doubt on earlier characterizations of Mamluk foreign policy as inflexible, although Muslu does not discuss this topic in detail.

In her conclusions, Muslu emphasizes the importance of new trends in scholarship and literature at Islamicate courts during the late Mamluk period and asks what these developments "meant or signified for […] imperial ideologies or their representations both to the domestic and foreign audiences," and notes that this question "deserves separate study."[215] The present study takes up Muslu's call for an analysis of these new cultural trends at the late Mamluk court. Before it can do so, however, it is necessary to discuss what we already know about the cultural and religious history of this period.

2.2.2   *Cultural and Religious Developments during al-Ghawrī's Reign*

In 1940, the Egyptian scholar Mohammad Awad brought three important works dating to al-Ghawrī's reign to the attention of the scholarly community in his "Sultan al-Ghawri: His Place in Literature and Learning." Awad correctly identified the first two works, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī* as proceedings of the *majālis* convened by al-Ghawrī. His descriptions of the works were short but accurate and laid a sound basis for later scholarship on these two texts, which are among the main sources of the present study. The third work Awad presented was a translation of the Persian *Shāhnāme* into Ottoman Turkish commissioned by al-Ghawrī, which in its original manuscript contained 62 miniatures.[216]

Awad's description of the *Shāhnāme* translation fell on fertile ground. Turkologists took an interest in the work as an early comprehensive specimen of Ottoman Turkish literature and in 1965, Ananiasz Zajączkowski published a partial facsimile edition of the text together with a detailed Turkological intro-

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213   Muslu, *Ottomans* 22, 179–80.

214   See especially Muslu, *Ottomans* 22–63.

215   Muslu, *Ottomans* 187 (both quotations).

216   Awad, Sultan.

duction,[217] while historians of art analyzed its miniatures. Nurhan Atasoy's "Un manuscrit Mamlūk illustré du Šāhnāma" (1969) is especially noteworthy here, as it it emphasized, for the first time, that the miniatures bore witness to influences from Persianate artistic traditions and reveal the artists' profound familiarity with Egyptian architecture.[218] In her article "Šerīf, Sultan Ġavrī und die ‚Perser'" (1969), Barbara Flemming discusses in detail the biography of the translator of the *Shāhnāme*[219] and contextualizes his work in the cultural sphere of al-Ghawrī's court, which reflected the ruler's fondness for Turkic- and Persian-speakers and interest in multilingual literature.[220] Kristof D'hulster recently reviewed the literature on the translation of the *Shāhnāme* in his "Sitting with Ottomans and Standing with Persians" (2010) and discusses the work as an important element of late Mamluk court culture, which was "characterized by a strong mixed Perso-Turkic flavour."[221]

While scholarship on the *Shāhnāme* translation has reached a certain level of maturity, the situation is notably different with regard to the other two texts Awad discussed. Here, much work remains to be done, despite the fact that 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām published in 1941 a volume with the title *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī: Ṣafaḥāt min tārīkh Miṣr min al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī* which later scholars often assumed to include a faithful and complete edition of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. In fact, however, 'Azzām's edition not only failed to meet scholarly standards, but also did not include substantial parts of the texts and did not properly indicate this, as is discussed in more detail below.[222] 'Azzām's short introductory discussion of the two sources does not go much beyond Awad's description.[223]

217   Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja*. See also Zajączkowski, Deylimler; Zajączkowski, Treny; Zajączkowski, Historia; Zajączkowski, Traduction. For the complete 1999 edition of the work, see Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi*.

218   Atasoy, Manuscrit 155–8. Her observations were confirmed in Mostafa, Paintings 10–2; Atıl, Painting 163–9. See also Atıl, *Renaissance* 253, 264–5; Bağci, Word 166.

219   See section 3.3.2 below.

220   Flemming, Perser 82–7, 89–91.

221   D'hulster, Sitting 229. See also section 3.2.2 below.

222   See sections 3.1.1.1 and 3.1.2.1 below.

223   'Azzām (ed.), *Majālis* 48–53. It is possible that Awad and 'Azzām worked together on the *majālis* texts. 'Azzām notes that he presented a paper on *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and the *Shāhnāme* translation at the 1938 Congress of Orientalists in Brussels, cf. 'Azzām (ed.), *Majālis* 3. Awad's article on these three texts was published in the proceedings of this conference. It seems unlikely that two Egyptian scholars were working simultaneously on the same texts and discussed them at the same academic event independently from each other, especially since the pertinent manuscripts were not located in

In 1976, in her article, "Aus den Nachtgesprächen Sultan Ġaurīs," Barbara Flemming analyzes selected aspects of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, focusing in particular on its Turkic passages and the non-Arabic influences it documented. Noting al-Ghawrī's literacy in multiple Islamicate languages, Flemming calls special attention to the multilingual poetic production at his court. Apart from the sultan's own poetry, she also provides information on other authors who belonged to his circle and wrote or transmitted Ottoman Turkish verses. Flemming's article, which was based on a microfilm of the original manuscript of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, offers a valuable study of most of the material in the work that was of interest to Turkologists, but only pays limited attention to other aspects of this predominantly Arabic text.[224]

More than twenty years later, Jonathan Berkey used the texts about the *majālis* as evidence for his hypothesis that *mamlūk*s played a significant role in shaping the religious life and thought of their time in his "The Mamluks as Muslims" (1998). Describing the sources as "underutilized" but "fascinating documents,"[225] Berkey notes the vast range of topics in the discussions in the sultan's *majālis*, some of which were connected to the most prominent religious debates of the Mamluk era and formed part of a larger "dynamic process of constructing and reconstructing Islam"[226] during the late middle period. Moreover, Berkey states that the texts, while containing a certain amount of flattery of al-Ghawrī, bear witness to a "relatively vigorous exchange of ideas"[227] in the sultan's circle.[228] Approaching the texts from a similar perspective, Stephan Conermann, in his "Es boomt! Die Mamlūkenforschung (1992–2002)," emphasizes that an analysis or annotated translation of the *majālis* accounts would be helpful for the study of Mamluk religious history.[229]

Tamīm Ma'mūn Mardam Bik's *al-Malik Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī l-ashraf wa-l-wazīr Lālā Muṣṭafā Bāshā dhī l-sayf al-aḥnaf* (2007) offers the only noteworthy discussion of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in Arabic. The author, a self-proclaimed direct descendant of the penultimate Mamluk ruler, dedicates a chapter of this work to al-Ghawrī's biography and his *majālis*. Upon closer scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that the text of the chapter is largely copied verbatim from

Egypt. Furthermore, given the overlap between Awad's article and ʿAzzām's introduction, it is even possible that Awad and ʿAzzām were one and the same person.

224 Flemming, Nachtgesprächen, esp. 22–6. See also Flemming, Activities 250–1. On Turkic elements in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, see Flemming, Stand 1158, 1161.

225 Berkey, Mamluks 170 (both quotations).

226 Berkey, Mamluks 173.

227 Berkey, Mamluks 173.

228 Berkey, Mamluks 170–3.

229 Conermann, Es boomt 50–1.

'Azzām's publication, including an incomplete edition of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* based on the latter's publication. The superficial comments Mardam Bik adds were often quoted from the Arabic version of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia.[230]

Robert Irwin made a more substantial contribution to our knowledge of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in several publications in the 2000s. In a summary article on "Mamluk Literature" (2003), Irwin dedicated a paragraph to the literary life under al-Ghawrī and especially highlighted the Persian and Turkic influences on the sultan's *majālis* and his court more generally, noting that the *majālis* texts "provide evidence for the openness of the sixteenth-century Mamluk court to foreign exemplars and, more broadly, of the spread of an international court culture throughout the eastern Islamic lands."[231] Moreover, in an anthology of Arabic literature, he later translated a passage from *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* about the origins of the *Shāhnāme*.[232]

In his short 2008 article, "The Political Thinking of the 'Virtuous Ruler,' Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī," Irwin used the *majālis* texts to reconstruct the Mamluk elite's ideology of rule. According to Irwin, the sources offer a valuable counterweight to the information provided by chroniclers such as Ibn Iyās, who often viewed the Mamluk elite in an unfavorable light.[233] Moreover, the author points out that al-Ghawrī's interest in Persianate culture was also reflected in the sphere of political thinking, where Persian texts such as the *Shāhnāme* and works of advice literature influenced by Persian thinking and a "secular" outlook played an important role in the sultan's circle. The article's discussion of pertinent sections of the *majālis* texts intends to corroborate these findings, however, it remains incomplete, as Irwin did not have access to the original manuscripts, but had to use 'Azzām's inadequate edition. Moreover, limiting itself in most cases to paraphrasing or re-narrating relevant passages, the publication failed to use the collected material to arrive at broader conclusions about the political thought at al-Ghawrī's court, beyond the basic observation that this kind of thought existed and was influenced by non-Arab and originally non-Islamic attitudes and traditions. Nevertheless, Irwin's study is valuable as it drew scholarly attention to the *majālis* texts, provided helpful information regarding their cultural background, and demonstrated that although al-Ghawrī used these texts as part of his self-representation as a well-educated and virtuous ruler, their contents reflected the events from which they originated.[234]

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230 Daisuke, Review 169–70.
231 Irwin, Literature 28.
232 Irwin, *Night* 441–3.
233 Irwin, Thinking 37–8.
234 Irwin, Thinking 40–9.

Yehoshua Frenkel revisited the topic of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in his "The Mamluks among the Nations" (2014). This article, which analyzes how Mamluk sultans related their rule to that of past rulers in order to legitimate and contextualize it transregionally, quotes the texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* (as edited by ʿAzzām) as pertinent examples.[235] In addition, Frenkel adds to our knowledge about the context of the *majālis* works by drawing attention to a short work called *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt wa-nawādir* (Collection of tales and anecdotes) written for al-Ghawrī.[236]

The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Kingship (2019) by Christopher Markiewicz incorporates a discussion of selected aspects of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Focusing primarily on the life, works, and thought of the itinerant scholar and political figure Idrīs Bidlīsī (d. 926/1520), Markiewicz used the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, including *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, to examine the court culture that Bidlīsī witnessed during his sojourn, which included a short stay as al-Ghawrī's guest in Mamluk lands from 917/1511 to 919/1513.[237] In particular, Markiewicz focuses on passages in the *majālis* works that shed light on the relations between the Mamluks and the Ottomans[238] and on the general character of court life under al-Ghawrī, which he characterized as "cosmopolitan"[239] and as culturally comparable to that of the Ottomans and Timurids.[240] Moreover, Markiewicz highlights the impact of this outlook on the conceptualizations of Mamluk rulership at al-Ghawrī's court and the presentation and legitimation of al-Ghawrī's rule, which were receptive to innovations originating in the Persianate lands.[241]

Most recently,[242] Elias G. Saba briefly referred to the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in his study of Islamic legal distinctions (2019). Saba notes that, compared to similar events in earlier and later periods, "much less is known about

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235   Frenkel, Nations 62–3, 68–9, 71.

236   Frenkel, Nations 71–2. See section 3.2.3 below.

237   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 106–10.

238   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 107.

239   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 108.

240   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 108.

241   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109–10, 185.

242   Other publications that mention the *majālis* in passing include ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 237–8; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 41–4; Mauder, *Krieger* 115–6; D'hulster, Sitting 239–40, 251–3; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 76–9, 84–6; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 18; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 6; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment* 133, 136; Haarmann, Miṣr 175; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 30, 41–2; Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 102–3; Ohta, Bindings 215; Kollatz, *Inspiration* 60–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 175; Muslu, Patterns 407–8. For a more detailed study, see Mauder, Read, forthcoming.

the *majālis* of the Mamluk era,"[243] and emphasizes the exceptional character of the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* when he states that "the record of the *majālis* at the court of al-Ghawrī are one of the few direct transcripts of any *majālis* involved in legal discussions,"[244] thus highlighting their importance for the study of Islamic law.

Taken together, thus far, all the publications on *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* constitute essayistic and often unsystematic explorations of a rather narrow range of selected aspects, including in particular the non-Arabic and/or politically relevant elements of the texts. Moreover, with the exception of the early works of Awad and Flemming, all of the works noted have relied on ʿAzzām's incomplete and inadequate edition. Furthermore, all authors who hitherto referred to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, except Frenkel and Markiewicz, took for granted the established corpus of *majālis* texts and did not seek to factor other texts of the same background into their analysis. For this reason, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, which contains another literary representation of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* written by a participant, has been almost completely overlooked.[245] A systematic analysis of all known sources originating from al-Ghawrī's *majālis* based on the original manuscript witnesses and taking into account more than just a few narrowly selected aspects of these multifaceted texts seems overdue.

A thorough analysis of the texts about al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and the events from which they originated must build on what is known about their cultural context. Among other aspects, such an analysis should include the aforementioned Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme* and the corpus of poems attributed to al-Ghawrī, a significant part of which has been edited and studied by Shaʿbān Muḥammad Mursī (1981), Mehmet Yalçın (2002), Orhan Yavuz (2002), and Orhan Yavuz and Mahmut Kafes (2012).[246]

Equal attention should be paid to al-Ghawrī's sponsorship of architecture and material culture. The sultan's *waqf*-supported funeral complex in Cairo, which constitutes his most important architectural project, was the subject of Khaled A. Alhamzah's monograph *Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghūrī's Waqfs and His Foundations in Cairo* (2009), which examined the buildings of

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243   Saba, *Harmonizing* 123.

244   Saba, *Harmonizing* 129.

245   The only publications in Western languages mentioning this text are Eckmann's overview articles on Mamluk-Kipchak Literature; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109–10; and the brief note, Mauder and Markiewicz, Source. Eckmann, Literature 310, erroneously identified the text as a "universal history." See also Eckmann, Literatur 299.

246   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân*; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı*; Yavuz and Kafes (eds.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı.

the complex and its endowment deed to demonstrate that piety, the care for his family's material needs, and his aspirations to boost the legitimacy of his rule were the key motives behind the construction of al-Ghawrī's exceptionally magnificent complex.[247] Furthermore, Alhamzah's findings, that the complex exhibited several novel architectural features that could be explained, at least in part, as results of Persianate influence, correspond well with other findings regarding al-Ghawrī's receptivity toward innovations and non-local cultural elements.[248]

Earlier work on al-Ghawrī's construction activities was undertaken in She-muel Tamari's "An Inscription of Qānṣūh al-Ġūrī from ʿAqabat al-ʿUrqūb" (1971), which shed light on the sultan's investments in the Egyptian pilgrimage route to the Hijaz. Tamari's study is also noteworthy for his evaluation of al-Ghawrī's scholarly activities and support of architecture. It credits the sultan with "goad[ing] the Mamluk state into a brief 'renaissance' before it sank into its final decline,"[249] and thereby contradicts authors such as Ashtor and Labib, who describe this sultan's reign as a period of crisis.

Tamari was not the only scholar who applied the term "renaissance" to al-Ghawrī's time. While Esin Atıl employed this notion to characterize the entire Mamluk period in his *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (1981),[250] Doris Behrens-Abouseif used it specifically for the narrower field of metal work in the late Mamluk period.[251] Her valuable "Sultan al-Ghawrī and the Arts" (2002) shows that other arts blossomed during al-Ghawrī's time as well, and that the sultan was directly involved in various fields of artistic production, such as painting and architecture. Noting again the prominence of Persian and Turkic cultural influences, as well as the introduction of novel artistic forms,[252] Behrens-Abouseif underlines that al-Ghawrī was known among his contem-poraries for his lavish ceremonies and costly festivities.[253] Following Ibn Iyās, she explains the sultan's support of artisans and his interest in elaborate cere-monies in part through his "hedonistic inclinations."[254] Moreover, she shows that al-Ghawrī used artistic forms of expression that were often unheard of in the Mamluk realm, in order to present himself as a sophisticated ruler on a

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247   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 125–43.
248   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 131–2, 139–40. On the complex, see also ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Majmūʿat al-Sulṭān*.
249   Tamari, Inscription 175–6.
250   See, however, Irwin, Eyes 43.
251   Behrens-Abouseif, Deckelgefäß 179.
252   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 78–84. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Perceptions 86.
253   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 73–6.
254   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 73.

par with his Turkic and Persian peers, support his claims for legitimate rule, and add to his sultanic prestige.[255] Building on Behrens-Abouseif, Alison Ohta recently studied the development of bookbinding under al-Ghawrī and likewise found evidence of his receptivity toward Persian artistic trends in particular.[256] She considered these trends part of an artistic "renaissance"[257] during the late Mamluk period.

These research results about al-Ghawrī's support of artistic production and especially his personal involvement in scholarly matters stand in opposition to the image of the Mamluk military elite that has dominated the historical literature for decades. According to their traditional image, members of the elite lacked both interest in and the ability to participate in the cultural, religious, and intellectual life of their Arabic-speaking subject population. Annemarie Schimmel was an outspoken advocate of this understanding of Mamluk society; in 1965, she noted that "[t]he impression we get from the later sources is that neither the Mamlūk Sultans themselves nor the *amīrs* [...] had any interest in spiritual things. Only a comparatively small number had sufficient knowledge of literary, or at least grammatically correct, Arabic."[258]

Barbara Flemming was one of the first scholars to cast doubt on this view. Already in 1969, she called for studies focusing on the Mamluk military elites' scholarly activities and patronage to counter these misrepresentations that were based on biased sources.[259] In her groundbreaking "Literary Activities in Mamluk Halls and Barracks" (1977), she demonstrates that, especially in the late Mamluk period, members of the military engaged in various literary and scholarly activities. Apart from al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, she mentions similar discussions initiated by other Mamluk rulers, as well as religious and educational contacts between high-ranking military figures, on the one hand, and the often Turkic-speaking scholars and Sufis they supported, on the other. Many of these men produced Turkic literary compositions and translations for their patrons. In some cases, these works became part of the massive book collections for which numerous Mamluk *amīr*s were known.[260] Moreover, Flemming pointed to the existence of many manuscripts produced by *mamlūk*s as part of

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255 Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 84–6. Unlike Irwin, Behrens-Abouseif points to the innovative character of the *majālis* debates about the caliphate.

256 Ohta, Bindings, esp. 217–8, 220.

257 Ohta, Bindings 217.

258 Schimmel, Glimpses 356. For further examples, see Mauder, *Krieger* 14–5, 21–2; Mauder, Development 963–4; Mauder, Education.

259 Flemming, Perser 88–9.

260 Flemming, Activities 250–3.

their education and intended for the libraries of Qāytbāy and al-Ghawrī.[261] This manuscript corpus and the question of its origin was recently revisited by Doris Behrens-Abouseif as part of her study of Mamluk book culture in which she largely agreed with Flemming's findings and interpretations.[262]

Building in part on Flemming's work, in "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria" (1988) Ulrich Haarmann sheds additional light on the educational activities of numerous members of the Mamluk military by studying their biographies. Haarmann shows that the Arabic-speaking authors of these biographies had an interest in playing down both the intellectual achievements of *mamlūk*s and *amīr*s and the level of sophistication of Mamluk courtly culture in order to maintain their own social status. His far-sighted analysis reads:

> The question of an indigenous Mamluk court culture simply did not appear to be relevant to the contemporary *ʿulamāʾ* [...]. The Mamluks remained labelled as military men who were not susceptible to, let alone creative in, the refinements of art and literature. [...] The *ʿulamāʾ* of the Mamluk period declared culture and science their own proper domain. The alien Turkish-Mamluk *mukalwatūn*, 'cap-bearers', who remained beyond their control, were not supposed to distinguish themselves in learning. [...] Due to this bias, we must assume that many cultural achievements of Mamluks were simply passed over and suppressed. [...] *ʿUlamāʾ* continued to write about *ʿulamāʾ* and for *ʿulamāʾ*, paying little or no attention in their works to all those who stood outside their own circles. [...] [T]his predominantly negative image of the uncouth and uncultured Turk has lamentably remained virulent into the modern period. Turks and Mamluks were held mainly responsible for the downfall of manners and culture in the Arabic-speaking Middle East.[263]

These biases, which Haarmann also explored in other publications,[264] notwithstanding, even authors critical of the Mamluk military elite acknowledged that many of its members pursued scholarly interests, especially in the fields of prophetic traditions, Sufism, and law.[265] Jonathan P. Berkey's *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (1992) provides additional evidence that

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261   Flemming, Activities 253–60. See section 3.5 below.
262   Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 97–102. See also Atanasiu, *Phénomène*, esp. 51, 209.
263   Haarmann, Arabic 82–4.
264   See, e.g., Haarmann, Injustice 75–6; Haarmann, Ideology 176, 182–3, 188.
265   Haarmann, Arabic. See also Mauder, *Krieger* 17–8.

members of the military supported the transmission of knowledge not only financially, but also actively participated in scholarly activities, most notably in the field of *ḥadīth* transmission.[266]

The present author revisited the topic in his *Gelehrte Krieger: Die Mamluken als Träger arabischsprachiger Bildung nach al-Ṣafadī, al-Maqrīzī und weiteren Quellen* (2012) and other publications.[267] Based on statistical analyses of several hundred biographies of members of the Mamluk military, these publications show that roughly one-eighth of these men were known for pursuing scholarly interests. While *ḥadīth* and law were their most important fields of study, the subjects they engaged with also included Arabic literature, Quranic studies, linguistics, astronomy, Sufism, and history.[268] Moreover, the publications analyze how institutional obstacles, linguistic differences, and their often problematic relations with scholarly circles prevented former slave soldiers from academic activities and shed light on their practical, political, and religious motivations for obtaining knowledge.[269] Further attention is paid to the biases and vested interests of Arabic-speaking authors that led them to downplay, if not entirely ignore, the cultural achievements of members of the Mamluk military.[270]

In his article mentioned above, Haarmann notes, in passing, the importance of the Mamluk court in scholarly and literary activities during the last decades of the sultanate.[271] Subsequent scholarship rarely took up these remarks and indeed paid hardly any attention to Mamluk court culture at all. Karl Stowasser's 8-page article "Manners and Customs at the Mamluk Court" (1984) is still the most comprehensive general study of Mamluk court life. Based on widely available chronicles and chancery manuals, it elucidates, for the first time, key elements of Mamluk court life, such as the origins of its offices and the protocol of high-profile events.[272] Unfortunately, this superficial article, devoid of footnotes and proper references, does not make clear to which periods in Mamluk history its observations apply, lacks a definition of the term "court," and contains factual errors and typos that diminish its value.[273]

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266   Berkey, *Transmission* 128–60. See also Berkey, Silver; Mauder, *Krieger* 19–21.

267   Mauder, Development; Mauder, Education.

268   Mauder, *Krieger* 93–155; Mauder, Development 968–73; Mauder, Education.

269   Mauder, *Krieger* 156–72; Mauder, Development 974–7; Mauder, Education.

270   Mauder, *Krieger* 32–8, 174–6.

271   Haarmann, Arabic 86, 89.

272   Stowasser, Manners 15–20.

273   E.g., Stowasser, Manners 17 (mix-up about how the captain of the guard addressed the sultan), 17 (misspelling of the Arabic word for the sultan's entourage), 20 (misunderstanding of the term *amīr al-nawrūz*, on which see Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 43).

Doris Behrens-Abouseif made a much more substantial, but thematically limited, contribution to Mamluk court studies in her "The Citadel of Cairo: Stage for Mamluk Ceremonial" (1988), in which she highlights the role of the citadel of Cairo as the main venue for Mamluk courtly ceremonial life, and pays special attention also to the late Mamluk period.[274] Interested primarily in architectural aspects of Mamluk court culture, Behrens-Abouseif's article neatly elucidates the spatial dimension of Mamluk courtly events within the citadel, but does not focus on other relevant courtly localities and just points to the relevance of alternative, non-spatial perspectives on the Mamluk court. Likewise, Albrecht Fuess' "Between *dihlīz* and *dār al-ʿadl*: Forms of Outdoor and Indoor Royal Representation at the Mamluk Court in Egypt" (2011) is primarily interested in the spatial dimension of Mamluk court life. It shows how Mamluk rulers used different spatial arrangements to make themselves approachable under controlled conditions.[275] Following a similar trajectory of research, Willem Flinterman and Jo van Steenbergen examine Mamluk court culture and elite formation during the reign of one of the most prominent Mamluk sultans in their "Al-Nasir Muhammad and the Formation of the Qalawunid State" (2015). They thereby pay special attention to how this sultan's "language of power"[276] became manifest in the production and use of material objects, including architecture.

In addition to these important publications, we have a limited number of studies dealing with more narrowly defined aspects of Mamluk court culture, such as food, sports, clothing, and symbols of rule.[277] Other works focus on specific courtly occasions, such as the inauguration of new *amīr*s, the pilgrimage to Mecca, sultanic entries, religious events, and transitions of rule.[278] None of these publications offers a comprehensive analysis of the Mamluk court against the background of a reasoned definition of this concept. As already noted in the introduction,[279] this dearth of specialized studies on Mamluk

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274   On the Cairo Citadel, see also Rabbat, *Citadel*, which mainly deals, however, with the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods. Earlier studies include Creswell, *Architecture* ii, 1–40; Casanova, *Histoire.*

275   Fuess, Between 150–60, 163.

276   Flinterman and van Steenbergen, Formation 87.

277   E.g., Levanoni, Food; Guo, *Sports*; Fuess, Sultans; Vermeulen, Tenue; Petry, Robing; Fuess, Between 160–3; Vermeulen, Note.

278   Van Steenbergen, Ritual; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend; Bresc, Entrées; Vermeulen, Aspects; Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel, esp. 224–38; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel*, esp. 100–32, 134–9; Sievert, Kampf; Sievert, Family, esp. 109–19.

279   See section 1.1 above.

court culture has given rise to the assumption that during the late middle period, the scholarly, literary, and cultural importance of these Egyptian had "diminished [...] to the point of irrelevance,"[280] as they purportedly no longer functioned as "the nexus of intellectual exchange."[281]

Taken together, the late Mamluk period in general and al-Ghawrī's reign in particular have received considerable scholarly attention. Nevertheless, there are imbalances and lacunae in the present state of research. Authors working on questions of political and economic history rarely engage in a meaningful way with findings in the fields of intellectual, cultural, and religious history, and vice versa.

At least equally problematic is the almost complete dependence of many publications on Ibn Iyās' chronicle. Written by a person directly involved in or affected by many of the developments it describes, Ibn Iyās' work is, without doubt, a first-rate source on al-Ghawrī's reign. However, it is far from being neutral or impartial. Therefore, modern historical studies that rely on it almost exclusively run the risk of reproducing Ibn Iyās' idiosyncrasies, blind spots, and biases. While some authors have strived to use Ibn Iyās' work critically, certainly historians studying the last years of Mamluk rule would do well to work with further relevant sources.

Moreover, the number of analytical categories and methodological concepts applied to late Mamluk history is quite limited so far. As argued in the study at hand, the concept of the "court" as a social entity that comes into existence through courtly events taking place in a given space can be a valuable instrument of historical research on the Mamluk Sultanate. However, while the word "court" and its derivatives often appear in publications in the field, even the few authors who focus on the Mamluk court as an explicit object of study do so without properly explaining what they mean by this term.

Finally, this survey of the state of research reveals that the *majālis* held by Sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī have hitherto received only scant scholarly attention. The sources describing these events still await a thorough analysis.

The present study makes a step toward filling these lacunae. Taking up insights from earlier research on al-Ghawrī's reign and bridging the gap between political, intellectual, cultural, and religious history, the work at hand seeks to alleviate our dependence on Ibn Iyās for information about the late Mamluk Sultanate by offering an in-depth analysis of the texts originating from

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280   Talib, *Epigram* 89.
281   Muhanna, *World* 20.

the sultan's *majālis*, alongside other sources. In so doing, it relies on the concept of the "court" as its main analytical tool to shed light on the transmission of knowledge, religious life, notions of rulership, and the representation and legitimation of rule at al-Ghawrī's court.

Arabic, Turkic, and Other Sources

While thus far the analysis of al-Ghawrī's reign has been based on a rather narrow corpus of sources, the present chapter demonstrates that the available source basis is much broader, once historians take into account works beyond the most common historiographical genres. Moreover, the chapter argues that a holistic study of al-Ghawrī's time—including its literary culture—is possible only when scholars bring this broad array of sources into conversation with each other. Of special importance among the inadequately studied source material are three texts written by authors[1] who maintained that they had participated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and wrote down what they witnessed during these occasions. The present chapter approaches these works, which constitute the main source basis of the study at hand, as literary texts, based on the assumption that a better understanding of their history, their background, the intentions with which they were written, and their genre helps us to assess their value as historical sources.[2] Thereafter, the chapter surveys a selection of other textual sources in Arabic, as well as in Turkic and European languages, sources that offer often untapped insights into the history of al-Ghawrī's court and his tenure more generally. The chapter concludes with a survey of pertinent material and epigraphical evidence, and a synopsis.

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1 The present study uses the term "author" to refer to the writers of these texts, although it must be acknowledged that the compilation of older material constituted a significant aspect of their literary activities and thus, they did not necessarily live up to modern-day expectations of authorial ingenuity, a fact that in turn suggests that "a modern concept of authorship where individuality and originality are crucial [...] is clearly misleading, if technically applied to pre-modern [Arabic] literature" (Ghersetti, Anthologist 23). By using the term "author" for these people, the present study agrees with Behzadi, Introduction 9–10, 14–5, who emphasizes the importance of the concept of authorship for the study of premodern Arabic literary texts and underlines that it can also be fruitfully applied to writers whose main activity was the compilation of older material. See also Behzadi and Hämeen-Anttila, Preface 7; Ghersetti, Anthologist 25–6.

2 For this approach, see, e.g., Kaplony, Arabistik 27.

3.1   Arabic Accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*

3.1.1   Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya

3.1.1.1   The Manuscript and Its Editions

Like the two other main primary sources of the present study, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya* is preserved in a single manuscript today located in Istanbul. As detailed information on this manuscript is, until now, not available in the scholarly literature, our discussion of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* must begin with a thorough description of the codicological features of this unique manuscript.[3]

The manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is preserved in the Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi in Istanbul and bears the shelf mark Ahmet III 2680.[4] The bulk of its text is in Arabic, but it also contains passages in Persian and Ottoman Turkish. Its title, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya*, appears in the titlepiece on the second page and in the introduction on the fourth page.[5] The manuscript does not include explicit information about its date of completion, but it can be safely dated to al-Ghawrī's reign based on its contents, its codicological features, and the explicit information on the first page, where it states that it was written "for the library (*bi-rasm khizānat*)[6] of […] al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī."[7] Moreover, internal evidence provides us with a terminus post quem of Shaʿbān 911/late December 1505, as the last event narrated in the text took place on the first day of this month.[8] The epilogue (*khātima*) of the work gives the name of its author as "Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī,"[9] while he usually refers to himself in the main part of the text as "al-Sharīf."

The incipit of the manuscript reads:

<div dir="rtl">

اغفر ذنوبنا يا سلطان السلاطين واستر عيوبنا يا مالك يوم الدين ...

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3   The following manuscript descriptions rely on the terminology and template outlined in Gacek, *Vademecum*. They are based on digital reproductions since I was not granted physical access to the manuscripts.

4   Karatay, *Yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 207, lists it as no. 5285.

5   On the pagination of the manuscript, see below.

6   For *khizāna* as "library" cf. Hirschler, *Word* 125; Hirschler, *Damascus* 87–8. See also Liebrenz, *Damaskus* 306, Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 7, 19, 52, 56; Eche, *Bibliothèques* 3–4; Taşkömür, Books 390.

7   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 1.

8   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 141.

9   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145.

The manuscript includes neither a colophon nor information on its copyist and while it seems possible that it might be the author's own fair copy of the work, there is no positive evidence to corroborate this assumption.[10]

The manuscript is written on finished paper of creamy color and uniform size, with each page measuring 275 mm in height and 180 mm in width.[11] Each page features 15 lines that cover an area 195 mm high and 120 mm wide. The 272 pages of the manuscript are numbered in numerals in Ottoman style in black ink placed in the middle of the upper part of each page. At a later point of time, what is clearly another hand added a foliation in modern European numerals using a pencil. Neither the foliation nor the pagination includes the two flyleaves, one of which is located at the beginning and the other one at end of the text block. While the first part of the manuscript features catchwords on the left-hand bottom corner of almost every other page, this regular pattern stops after page 98, after which catchwords appear only very rarely and without a discernable pattern.

The main text of the manuscript is written in a single hand, mostly in a very clear and regular *naskh* script, while a few selected elements are highlighted by being written in *thuluth*. The letters are fully pointed. Vowel marks, usually in the same color as the letters to which they belong, appear sparingly in most of the main text, but are used more consistently in the case of chapter headings and rubrications.[12] The preface is fully voweled, as are non-Arabic verses appearing in the text. The manuscript features a few corrections in the same hand as the main text. In these instances, gold leaf is used to cover the original faulty passages, with corrections written on top of it.

The manuscript is consistently polychrome. Whereas the main text is written in black ink, chapter headings of the highest order, as well as, especially, highlighted words such as the name of the patron al-Ghawrī are in gold.[13] The same color is used for the textual dividers on pages 2 and 3.[14] Chapter headings of the second order appear in blue ink, while the majority of the third

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10   It has been suggested that the copy was produced by the author of the work, e.g., in ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 49. If a scribe had produced the manuscript, he probably would have corrected at least some of its grammatical peculiarities, discussed below.

11   Karatay, *Yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 207.

12   On rubrications in Mamluk manuscripts, see van Berkel, Opening 369–70.

13   On gold ink, see Déroche et al., *Codicology* 118–9; and on the use of colored inks in general, see Daub, *Formen* 154–6.

14   On textual dividers, see Rosenthal, *Technique* 16; Daub, *Formen* 60–4.

FIGURE 3.1 Pages 84 and 85 of Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, known as al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2680

order headings, as well as the dots and inverted commas employed as textual dividers and paragraph marks, are in red. Green and dark red ink is usually used for highlighted words that mark the beginning of a final passage (*khātima*), a narrative (*ḥikāya*), a poem, or a fitting anecdote and/or aphorism (*munāsib*). Words highlighted in green and dark red also indicate the beginning as well as the solution of a riddle (*lughz*) (see fig. 3.1).

The manuscript includes two main decorated pieces: The rectangular panel of the titlepiece on the second page with gold script and white floral decorative elements on a blue ground and the frontispiece on the first page.[15] The latter consists of a roundish medallion (*shamsa*) with eight convexities. It features a white inscription identifying the manuscript as produced

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15   On such panels, called *sarlawḥ*s, as typical elements on the second page of manuscripts, see Déroche et al., *Codicology* 237–8.

for al-Ghawrī's library.[16] The letters of this inscription are framed in gold ink, which is also used for the inner frame of the medallion and the decorative floral elements inside it which resemble those of the titlepiece. As in the case of the titlepiece, blue is used as the background color of the inner part of the medallion. Moreover, a thin blue line surrounds the medallion as an outer frame. It ends in floral elements at the top and the bottom of the medallion. The top blue floral element is crowned by a large gold disc. The only other non-calligraphic decorative element of the manuscript is the blue and gold rectangular double frame of pages 2 and 3.

The battered dark brown leather binding of the manuscript seems to be original. Its flap is still preserved, although the fore-edge flap is severely damaged and its lower part is partially torn off. The upper and lower covers and the flap are decorated with double gold frames with gold floral corner pieces. Both covers closely resemble Weisweiler type 96.[17] The doublure is made of yellow paper. Apart from the damage to its binding, the manuscript is in extremely good condition and gives the impression that it was not used much.

Multiple secondary entries can be found on its front flyleaf and the first page of the manuscript.[18] At some point, an Ottoman hand, which is probably identical to the one that inserted the pagination, added the shelf mark "Adabiyyāt 2780 396"[19] to the flyleaf. Notably, though for reasons that remain unclear, this shelf mark resembles, but does not match the current one, that is, Ahmet III 2680.

The first page features three secondary entries: The one that is clearly the most recent has a purple stamp in Latin script with the present-day shelf mark in the upper left corner. The second one, a short and completely unreadable cursive note resembling signatures from the Ottoman period, is located in the lower right corner and touches the outer frame of the medallion in the middle of the page. The third secondary entry is a *waqf* seal impression with an Ottoman inscription including the calligraphically interlaced signature (*ṭughrāʾ*) of Aḥmed III (r. 1115–43/1703–30) located between the modern shelf mark stamp and the gold disc crowning the outer frame of the medallion. This seal impres-

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16   On *shamsa*s on the first page of manuscripts, see Déroche et al., *Codicology* 237. Similar design elements can be found on copper coins from al-Ghawrī's time, cf. Balog, *Coinage* 378; Balog, Hoard 255–6.

17   Weisweiler, *Bucheinband* 55, plates 38–9.

18   On the significance of secondary entries, colophons, and related types of evidence for the history of a manuscript, see, e.g., Déroche et al., *Codicology* 311–44, 350–4; Görke and Hirschler (eds.), *Notes* (esp. the editors' introduction); Hirschler, Archive 3; Liebrenz, *Damaskus* 19–33; Gacek, Statements; Reinfandt, Studies 298.

19   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS), fol. 1ʳ.

sion shows that the manuscript was once part of the library endowed and erected by this sultan as part of the Topkapı Palace.[20]

Based on these codiocological data, we can attempt to reconstruct the history of the manuscript. According to the information provided on the first page and in the text, it was produced during the reign of Sultan al-Ghawrī, probably in or not much later than 911/1506 and possibly in Cairo. From the very outset, the volume was intended as part of the sultan's book collection, as corroborated not only by the direct reference to the sultan's *khizāna* on the first page of the manuscript, but also by the high standard of its illumination,[21] the valuable materials involved in its production, and its elaborate, multicolored layout, all of which point to a courtly context of origin.[22]

The next established fact about the history of the manuscript is its placement in the endowed library of Aḥmed III at the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul at the beginning of the twelfth/eighteenth century. Most probably, the volume remained at this site ever since; today it is part of the book collection located in the same architectural complex.

The decisive question is how the manuscript ended up in the library of Aḥmed III after it became part of the holdings al-Ghawrī's *khizāna*. We know that Aḥmed III had a significant portion of the books in his library moved from the storage chambers of the imperial school in the inner part of the Topkapı Palace, which held a huge number of manuscripts obtained by his predecessors. In the imperial school, these manuscripts were largely unavailable to outside readers, which was one reason for their relocation to the library of Aḥmed III.[23] It seems plausible that the manuscript of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was among those that Aḥmed III transferred to his new library. This in turn suggests that the volume had been brought from Cairo to Istanbul by one of his predecessors.

We know, however, of only one large-scale project involving the relocation of Mamluk manuscripts to Istanbul. In his account of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, Ibn Iyās writes about the events of early 923/1517:

20   Keskiner, *Sultan* 51. On this library, see also Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries* 49–51, 130; Keskiner, *Sultan, passim.* On books as *waqf*s in the Ottoman period, see Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries* 128; Liebrenz, *Damaskus* 124–227; and in the Mamluk period Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 41.

21   On the importance of illuminations for ascertaining the social context of manuscripts, see Déroche et al., *Codicology* 226, 229–30.

22   On the importance of the study of layouts in Islamicate manuscripts, see now Daub, *Formen.*

23   Keskiner, *Sultan* 69–70. See also Erünsal, Establishment 4; Erünsal, Foundation Libraries 41–2, 76; Necipoğlu, Organization 23.

> Then, the [Ottoman] viziers proceeded to take away the precious books that were in the Maḥmūdiyya,[24] Mu'ayyadiyya,[25] and Ṣarghitmishiyya[26] Madrasas, and other *madrasas* [...] and had them [the books] brought to them and laid their hands on them, and they did not differentiate between allowed and forbidden [actions] in doing this.[27]

Later, the Ottomans packed the confiscated goods into boxes and sent them by ship to their capital.[28]

Although İsmail E. Erünsal recently voiced doubts regarding the reliability of Ibn Iyās' account with regard to the libraries of endowed complexes, even he affirms that at least the holdings of the Mamluk sultan at the citadel were definitely brought to Istanbul after the conquest.[29] Moreover, the Ottomans did not need to wait for the conquest of Cairo to seize some of the most valuable products of Mamluk bibliophile culture. When al-Ghawrī left for Syria to meet his Ottoman foe, he took with him not only the bulk of the Mamluk army, but also most of the movable holdings of the Mamluk treasury, including the collections of his *khizāna*, which he deposited in the storehouses of the Aleppo Citadel.[30] After the Mamluk defeat at Marj Dābiq, the Mamluk ruler's effects were an easy target for the Ottomans, who, according to Ibn Iyās "put seals on the storehouses [...] and took possession of the money, the weapons, the precious objects (*tuḥaf*), and other things inside them."[31] Although in this passage Ibn Iyās does not refer explicitly to the sultan's book collection, there is evidence that the Ottoman war booty included a sizable manuscript collection.[32] However, there is presently no indication that *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was among the books seized in Aleppo.

Taken together, it seems highly probable that Selīm obtained the manuscript of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* during the conquest of Mamluk Cairo, brought it

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24 On this *madrasa* founded by the administrative official Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. ʿAlī b. Aṣfar (d. 799/1396–7), see Berkey, *Transmission* 140–1, 197. On its library and the seized books, see also Hirschler, *Word* 132, 137–8, 144, 154.

25 On Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh's (r. 815–24/1412–21) funeral complex to which this *madrasa* belonged, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 239–44.

26 On this *madrasa* endowed by the *amīr* Ṣarghitmish al-Sayfī (d. 759/1358), see Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 196–9; Berkey, *Transmission* 62–3, 72, 76–7, 90–2, 132–3.

27 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 179. On Mamluk *madrasa* and mosque libraries in general, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 19–28.

28 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 183. Ibn Iyās does not refer explicitly to books in this passage.

29 Erünsal, Fethedilen 53.

30 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 42.

31 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 74–5. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 25.

32 Flemming, Turks 718. For books from al-Ghawrī's library, see esp. Ohta, Bindings 222.

to Istanbul, and deposited it in the Topkapı Palace where it has remained ever since.[33] This assumption about the history of the manuscripts blends in well with its state of preservation: As described, its binding is battered and shows signs of heavy wear and tear, which might well be the result of its transport from Cairo to Istanbul. However, its inner pages appear to be almost untouched, which makes sense when we take into account that it was preserved for about two hundred years in a place where few readers could access it. When it was made available to a wider audience in Aḥmed III's library, much of its contents must have been of mainly antiquarian interest to an Ottoman readership.

Many other Mamluk manuscripts associated with al-Ghawrī and his court also found their way to Istanbul. Some of these are discussed in the following pages. While it is often not possible to reconstruct their history with the same level of detail, it stands to reason that many, if not all of them, came to the Ottoman capital as spoils of war. The close association between these manuscripts and al-Ghawrī's strategies in representing his status as a ruler, discussed below, made them attractive trophies for his Ottoman adversaries.

The first edition of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* appeared in 1941 in Cairo as the second part of the volume *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī: Ṣafaḥāt min tārīkh Miṣr min al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī*. Its editor, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām, deserves credit for making this little known text partly accessible to the scholarly community. However, his edition, which is based on a reproduction of the Istanbul manuscript,[34] is not without problems: ʿAzzām did not edit the entire text as found in the original manuscript, but opted for a partial edition of the work. Moreover, he did not explain his editorial method, nor did he indicate where he left out textual material. Thus, he led numerous subsequent readers to the incorrect conclusion that what they had in front of them was actually the complete text of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. ʿAzzām's only statement about the partial character of his editions of both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī*, which appeared in the same volume, is somewhat hidden away toward the end of the technical comments in the editor's preface. Moreover, he only hints at his method of selection and abbreviation by declaring that he picked out "what is gratifying, and [...] spared the reader many of the tiring (*nāfiha*) and feeble (*mutasābiha*) ques-

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33   Newhall, *Patronage* 89–90, claims that Qāytbāy's and al-Ghawrī's libraries were relocated completely to Istanbul, but does not provide conclusive evidence. On the cultural and historic significance of the relocation of Mamluk manuscripts to Istanbul, see, e.g., Haarmann, Ideology 185, 189; Flemming, Turks 718; Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries* 30; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 27–8; Hirschler, *Damascus* 46, 49–53.

34   ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 3.

tions that the two books include."[35] A detailed comparison of ʿAzzām's text
and the manuscript shows that the Egyptian scholar included only 23 of the
original 99 sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in full in his version of the
text. Another 39 of the 99 sections are partially edited, while 37 are completely
missing. Taken together, ʿAzzām's edition provides the reader with only about
one-half of the original text.[36] Other shortcomings of ʿAzzām's edition include
its very sparse annotations, which are mainly limited to the identification of
selected historical figures mentioned in the text and remarks on a few linguist-
ically interesting passages. Furthermore, in ʿAzzām's edition numerous textual
"emendations" not only obscure the original linguistic makeup of the text—
which, as is shown below, provides important information on its author—, but
also, in part, distort the original meaning of the text.

For these reasons and unlike almost all previous publications on al-Ghawrī's
majālis, the present study relies on the complete text of *Nafāʾis majālis al-
sulṭāniyya* as found in the original manuscript. However, as the full text of the
work is, for the time being, only available in manuscript,[37] all references to
Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya include the page numbers that correspond to the
manuscript and to ʿAzzām's edition, where the respective section is reproduced
in ʿAzzām's work.[38]

3.1.1.2   Structure and Contents

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya consists of (1) an introductory section that com-
prises a preface and the introduction proper; (2) the main part, which is divided
into ten chapters called *rawḍa*s (lit. gardens),[39] which are subdivided into a
varying number of *majālis*; and (3) a concluding section containing an epilogue
and several poems.[40] The following table provides the reader with an overview
of the structure and contents of the work. Moreover, it indicates which sub-
sections are included completely or partially in ʿAzzām's edition:

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35   ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 3.
36   All new "editions" of the work are basically reprints of ʿAzzām's edition. On Mardam Bik's
      2007 edition, see section 2.2.2 above.
37   Given the excellent readability of the manuscript, its elaborate layout, and the many lin-
      guistic peculiarities of the text (on which see below), a new edition of the text should take
      the form of an annotated facsimile edition of the Istanbul unicum, provided the necessary
      permission could be obtained from the Directorate of the Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi.
38   Page numbers in the manuscript are preceded by "(MS)" and page numbers in the edition
      by "(ed. ʿAzzām)."
39   On the use of *rawḍa* for book sections, see Fākhūrī, Muqaddima, in al-Amāsī, *Rawḍ al-
      akhyār* 9.
40   See also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 49; Awad, Sultan 321.

TABLE 3.1   Overview of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*

MS pages	Pages in ʿAzzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date[41]
2–4	1–2 (complete)	Preface	*Khuṭba*; genesis of the work; praise of al-Ghawrī; title of the work; description of contents	–
4–6	3–5 (complete)	Introduction (*muqaddima*)	Sayings on the merit of knowledge	–
6–10	5–9 (complete)	1st *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	Prayer	23 Ramaḍān 910
10–6	9–15 (complete)	1st *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	*Fiqh* riddles	27 Ramaḍān 910
16–21	16–18 (incomplete)	1st *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	Fasting and fast-breaking	Last day of Ramaḍān 910
21–4	18–19 (incomplete)	2nd *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	Stories of various prophets, *fiqh* questions on drinking wine	5 Shawwāl 910
24–8	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph	9 Shawwāl 910
28–33	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	Eschatology; *tafsīr* of Q 1	12 Shawwāl 910
33–5	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 1	16 Shawwāl 910
35–9	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	The *basmala*	19 Shawwāl 910
39–41	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 4 and 20	20 Shawwāl 910
41–4	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on interest-free loans (sg. *qarḍ*) and alms	22 Shawwāl 910
44–7	(missing)	2nd *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	Stories of various prophets; *tafsīr* of related Quranic passages	25 Shawwāl 910
47–8	20–1 (complete)	2nd *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	No discussions due to the illness of the sultan's son who died soon thereafter	Last day of Shawwāl 910

41   It is not clear whether al-Sharīf regarded sunset as marking the beginning of a new day. On this understanding, see Stowasser, *Day* 141–2.

TABLE 3.1   Overview of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (*cont.*)

MS pages	Pages in 'Azzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
48–9	22–3 (incomplete)	3rd *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	Riddles	21 Dhū l-Ḥijja 910
49–52	(missing)	3rd *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	The ethical and religious value of poverty	23 Dhū l-Ḥijja 910
52–4	(missing)	3rd *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	Stories of various prophets; *tafsīr* of related Quranic passages	27 Dhū l-Ḥijja 910
55–7	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on family and divorce law	1 Muḥarram 911
57–9	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	On the concept of faith (*īmān*)	3 Muḥarram 911
59–61	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on ritual prayer	5 Muḥarram 911
61–3	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on oaths	8 Muḥarram 911
63–7	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on murder	10 Muḥarram 911
67–9	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on unbelief and conversion to Islam	12 Muḥarram 911
69–70	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	On the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, esp. his nocturnal journey	15 Muḥarram 911
70–2	23–4 (incomplete)	4th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on marriage and adultery	17 Muḥarram 911
73–4	24–5 (incomplete)	4th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	On wisdom and love	19 Muḥarram 911
74–6	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	Various *fiqh* topics	21 Muḥarram 911
76–9	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 11th *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph	23 Muḥarram 911
79–82	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 12th *majlis*	Stories of various prophets	25 Muḥarram 911
82–4	(missing)	4th *rawḍa*, 13th *majlis*	Stories of various prophets	28 Muḥarram 911
84–5	(missing)	5th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	*Ḥadīth*s and Quranic verses on eschatological topics	1 Ṣafar 911
85–7	(missing)	5th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	Eschatology; *fiqh* questions on divorce	3 Ṣafar 911

TABLE 3.1   Overview of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (*cont.*)

MS pages	Pages in 'Azzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
87–90	(missing)	5th *rawḍa*, 3nd *majlis*	Eschatology; *tafsīr* of various Quranic passages	6 Ṣafar 911
90–2	(missing)	5th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	Various *fiqh* topics	13 Ṣafar 911
92–4	25–6 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of various Quranic passages	15 Ṣafar 911
94–7	26 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	On angels and *jinn*s	17 Ṣafar 911
97–100	27–8 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	Riddles; faith (*īmān*) and the knowledge of God	20 Ṣafar 911
100–3	28–9 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	Riddles; various *fiqh* topics	22 Ṣafar 911
103–5	29 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Riddles; various *fiqh* topics	27 Ṣafar 911
105–8	29–30 (incomplete)	5th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	Various *fiqh* topics	29 Ṣafar 911
108–11	30–2 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on ritual prayer	2 Rabīʿ I 911
111–3	32–4 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	Riddles	5 Rabīʿ I 911
113–6	35–6 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 3:27; eschatological fate of non-Muslims	7 Rabīʿ I 911
116–8	37 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	Riddles; *tafsīr* of verses pertaining to angels	9 Rabīʿ I 911
118–30	38–50 (complete)	[Description of celebration]	Celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad	–
130–3	51 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	Riddles; various *fiqh* topics	12 Rabīʿ I 911
133–7	51–3 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	Lunar eclipse	14 Rabīʿ I 911
137–8	(missing)	6th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	Riddles; various *fiqh* topics	25 Rabīʿ I 911
138–41	(missing)	6th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	Riddles; *fiqh* questions on theft	27 Rabīʿ I 911

MS pages	Pages in ʿAzzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
141–3	53–5 (incomplete)	6th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Riddles; various *fiqh* topics	Last day of Rabīʿ I 911
143–7	55–6 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on ritual purity; stories of Persian rulers	3 Rabīʿ II 911
147–9	56–7 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of various Quranic passages	5 Rabīʿ II 911
149–51	(missing)	7th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	On the history of *fiqh*	7 Rabīʿ II 911
151–3	(missing)	7th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on divorce	10 Rabīʿ II 911
153–6	57–9 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	Chess; prophetology	12 Rabīʿ II 911
156–8	59–60 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	Stories of various prophets	14 Rabīʿ II 911
158–9	60 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	Various *fiqh* topics	17 Rabīʿ II 911
159–62	(missing)	7th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 33:72	19 Rabīʿ II 911
162–4	(missing)	7th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Riddles; *tafsīr* of Q 4:163	21 Rabīʿ II 911
164–6	61–3 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	Riddles; *fiqh* questions on ritual prayer	23 Rabīʿ II 911
166–8	63–4 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 11th *majlis*	Story of al-Khiḍr	25 Rabīʿ II 911
168–71	64–6 (incomplete)	7th *rawḍa*, 12th *majlis*	Riddles; praise poems	28 Rabīʿ II 911
171–3	66–8 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	Humorous narratives	2 Jumādā I 911
173–7	68–70 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 19	4 Jumādā I 911
177–9	(missing)	8th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	Riddles; story of the Prophet Jesus; *tafsīr* of related Quranic passages	6 Jumādā I 911
179–80	71–2 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	Various *fiqh* topics	9 Jumādā I 911

TABLE 3.1 Overview of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (*cont.*)

MS pages	Pages in ʿAzzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
180–3	72–4 (complete)	8th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	On the pilgrimage	11 Jumādā I 911
183–6	(missing)	8th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	Riddles; harmonization of seemingly contradictory *ḥadīth*s	13 Jumādā I 911
186–7	75 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	Riddles; *fiqh* questions on ablution	16 Jumādā I 911
187–91	76–7 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	On God's attributes	18 Jumādā I 911
191–2	77–9 (complete)	8th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Advantages and disadvantages of speech	20 Jumādā I 911
192–5	79–80 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	Riddles; prophetic dreams	23 Jumādā I 911
195–9	81–5 (complete)	8th *rawḍa*, 11th *majlis*	The *Shāhnāme* and its history	25 Jumādā I 911
199–201	85–6 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 12th *majlis*	Origin of the Circassians	27 Jumādā I 911
201–2	86–7 (incomplete)	8th *rawḍa*, 13th *majlis*	Reward for prayer	Last day of Jumādā I 911
203–5	87–9 (incomplete)	9th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	Kurds	7 Jumādā II 911
205–6	90–1 (complete)	9th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	Position of the first-person narrator	8 Jumādā II 911
206–9	91–4 (complete)	9th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph	9 Jumādā II 911
209–11	95–6 (incomplete)	9th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	The appointed time of death (*ajal*); *fiqh* questions on theft	11 Jumādā II 911
211–3	96 (incomplete)	9th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	Justice of the Caliph ʿUmar	14 Jumādā II 911
213–5	(missing)	9th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	Riddles; Umayyad history	16 Jumādā II 911
215–6	(missing)	9th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	ʿAbbasid history	18 Jumādā II 911

TABLE 3.1   Overview of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (*cont.*)

MS pages	Pages in 'Azzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
216–8	96–100 (complete)	9th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on the alms tax	23 Jumādā II 911
218–20	(missing)	9th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Umayyad and 'Abbasid history	25 Jumādā II 911
220–5	100–7 (complete)	9th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	The caliphate	28 Jumādā II 911
225–8	107–9 (complete)	9th *rawḍa*, 11th *majlis*	Properties of the political leader of the community (*imām*)	30 Jumādā II 911
228–32	109–14 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 1st *majlis*	The caliphate	3 Rajab 911
232–5	(missing)	10th *rawḍa*, 2nd *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on oaths	6 Rajab 911
235–7	114–6 (incomplete)	10th *rawḍa*, 3rd *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on the purchase and manumission of slaves; the vice of arrogance	8 Rajab 911
237–40	116–7 (incomplete)	10th *rawḍa*, 4th *majlis*	*Fiqh* questions on divorce	10 Rajab 911
240–3	117–22 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 5th *majlis*	*Tafsīr* of Q 14	13 Rajab 911
243–7	123–6 (incomplete)	10th *rawḍa*, 6th *majlis*	Celebration of the sultan's birthday	15 Rajab 911
247–9	(missing)	10th *rawḍa*, 7th *majlis*	Story of Alexander the Great	17 Rajab 911
249–51	126–7 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 8th *majlis*	Edifices erected by al-Ghawrī	20 Rajab 911
251–6	128–31 (incomplete)	10th *rawḍa*, 9th *majlis*	Historical episodes	22 Rajab 911
256–9	131–5 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 10th *majlis*	Historical episodes	24 Rajab 911
259–61	135–8 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 11th *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph	27 Rajab 911

TABLE 3.1 Overview of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (*cont.*)

MS pages	Pages in 'Azzām's edition	Section	Main topics	Date
261–3	138–41 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 12th *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph; al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*	29 Rajab 911
263–8	141–4 (complete)	10th *rawḍa*, 13th *majlis*	Story of the Prophet Joseph	1 Sha'bān 911
268–70	145–6 (complete)	Epilogue (*khātimat al-kitāb*)	Identification of the author; prayer of the sultan; apologies for the author's mistakes; presentation of the book; dedication poem	–
270–2	147–9 (complete)	Poems by and for al-Ghawrī	Praise of the ruler; pleas for God's mercy	–

The introductory section begins with a *khuṭba*[42] in which the author asks for God's mercy and praises the Prophet Muḥammad. The usage of the epithet "sultan of the prophets" (*sulṭān al-anbiyā'*) for Muḥammad[43] at the beginning of the work is noteworthy and already points to the high esteem accorded to the institution of the sultanate throughout the text.

In the remainder of the preface, the author explains, in rhymed prose, that he has been honored to stand in the service (*khidma*) of Sultan al-Ghawrī, that he had frequented the sultan for ten months, and that he made a record of the useful lessons (*fawā'id*) the latter had provided.[44]

The author then goes on to praise the virtues (*faḍā'il*) and outstanding traits (*manāqib*) that God granted the sultan; he especially singles out his acumen (*fahm*), intellect (*dhihn*), insight (*ḥilm*), knowledge (*'ilm*), rank (*rutab*), authority (*mulk*), courage (*shujā'a*), and generosity (*sakhāwa*).[45] These virtues allow al-Ghawrī to surpass the "sultans of the world like the sultans of the world [surpass their] subjects."[46] However, there is even more:

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42 On *khuṭba* in this context, see Freimark, *Vorwort* 22.
43 Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 2; (ed. 'Azzām) 1.
44 Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 3; (ed. 'Azzām) 2.
45 Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 3; (ed. 'Azzām) 2.
46 Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 3; (ed. 'Azzām) 2.

All of these qualities and outstanding traits go hand in hand with [his] love for knowledge and those who are knowledgeable (*muḥabbat al-ʿilm wa-l-ʿulamāʾ*), and [his] inquiry into that which the wise men have laid down in all kinds of scholarly disciplines (*ʿulūm*). If someone were to say, in describing this phenomenon (*maẓhar*), that he is the sultan of scholars and those who have attained mastery (*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*), he would not be wrong, or if he were to say, in praising him, that he is the sultan of the insightful (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*), he would not be mistaken in his description.[47]

Thereafter, the author provides a description of his work:

It comprises an introduction and ten gardens. The useful lessons of the sultan's salons (*majālis*) and precious pearls (*farāʾid*) of the gems of the Quranic quips (*nikāt*) should be written with gold dust (*tibr*) and not with ink, because they contain the mysteries of the Quranic verses, consist of narratives, incorporate prophetic traditions, and comprise the mysteries of the Arabic language.[48]

The following section, which is referred to as the introduction proper (*muqaddima*) takes up the topic of the sultan's knowledge.[49] It includes "the sayings of mighty sultans about the merit of knowledge (*fī faḍl al-ʿilm*)."[50] Among them, we find persons such as Alexander the Great, the Faghfūr[51] of China, the Byzantine emperor (*qayṣar*), the Fūr[52] of India, various pre-Islamic rulers of Persia, such as Ardashīr and Bahrām Gūr, the Khān of the Turks and—as the only Muslim ruler—Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 388–421/998–1030). Most of the sayings attributed to these persons are gnomic maxims about the value of knowledge in general and its importance for rulers in particular. Ardashīr, for example, is quoted with the following aphorism reflecting ancient Persian political thinking as understood by later Muslim authors: "Knowledge is the foundation of religion, and religion is the basis of rule. The ruler is the keeper of religion. What has no basis will be destroyed, and what has no keeper will get

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47   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ᴍs) 3–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
48   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ᴍs) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2–3.
49   On *muqaddima* in this context, see Freimark, *Vorwort* 22, 28, 116.
50   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ᴍs) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3. See also Irwin, Thinking 43.
51   On this typical title of Chinese rulers in premodern Arabic sources, see Lewis et al., Faghfūr.
52   On the etymology of this term, which derives from the Grecized Indian proper name Poros that entered Arabic as Fūr, see Manteghi, Alexander 161; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 53.

lost."[53] The aphorism ascribed to Maḥmūd of Ghazna reads: "Knowledge is the physician of religion, and money is its enemy."[54]

The final authority quoted on the merit of knowledge is Sultan al-Ghawrī himself, who is referred to as "the seal of the sultans" (*khātim al-salāṭīn*).[55] This phrase immediately brings to mind the Quranic verse 33:40, where Muḥammad is called "the seal of the prophets"—a formulation which, according to the understanding of most Muslims, implies that Muḥammad is chronologically the last in a line of prophets. In the present context, however, the phrase "the seal of the sultans," which is also known from Timurid titulature, is probably only intended to mean that al-Ghawrī is the best of the sultans who will not be surpassed by any later ruler.[56] Among the sayings attributed to al-Ghawrī, we read, for instance: "There is nothing in the world that is better than refinement (*adab*),[57] for it adorns the rich and veils the poverty of the poor."[58]

When viewed in its entirety, the introductory section of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* appears as a carefully constructed attempt to present al-Ghawrī as a ruler who possesses such virtues and such knowledge that he is the latest—and possibly unsurpassed—member in a line of extraordinary rulers. Al-Sharīf, the author of our text, makes clear that al-Ghawrī's qualifications as a ruler rest especially on his intellectual merits, which he indicates by referring to such concepts as acumen and insight. These concepts are paired with two classical virtues of rulers: courage and generosity. Al-Ghawrī's remarkable qualities, which are bestowed on him by God and inspire his personal quest for knowledge, as well as his support for scholars, find expression in his designation as "sultan of the scholars" (*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ*) and "sultan of the insightful" (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*). These two epithets, which recur throughout al-Sharīf's text, are emblematic of the image of al-Ghawrī that is promoted in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. The high intellectual level of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, the descriptions of which make up the main part of the text, confirm the ruler's personal qualities and his interest in scholarship and learning.

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53 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4. On this saying, see also, e.g., Lambton, Justice 96; Marlow, Kings 112; Auer, *Symbols* 138. The same saying already appears with the same attribution in al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*. It is unclear whether al-Sharīf took it directly from this work, as it "is quoted by innumerable writers after Masʿūdī" (Lambton, Justice 96).

54 This saying also appears, e.g., in al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* 244, where it is attributed to Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778).

55 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4.

56 Cf. Richard, Témoignage 66 for a Timurid parallel.

57 On this term, see section 3.1.4 below.

58 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4. This saying could not be located in this form in any other source.

Yet, according to our text al-Ghawrī is not the only ruler who knows the value of knowledge and pursues it. The exemplary rulers of the past share his concern for attaining this quality, as is attested to by their wise sayings. Thus, the mightiest rulers of the world appear in the *muqaddima* as crown witnesses for the significance of knowledge for human life in general and rulership in particular. Remarkably, almost all of these rulers are non-Muslims, suggesting that the political philosophy behind the concept of rulership as advocated in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is not necessarily, or primarily, based on religious foundations. Al-Ghawrī, as the "seal of sultans," marks the culmination of this line of exemplary rulers. Thus, the introduction presents al-Ghawrī as one of the greatest rulers of human history, if not indeed the greatest.

Directly after the introduction, the main part of the text consisting of ten chapters or "gardens" begins. Each of these gardens includes the accounts of the *majālis* that take place in a specific month between Ramaḍān 910 (beginning in February 1505) and Shaʿbān 911 (beginning in late December 1505), with the last garden including the salons of both Rajab and Shaʿbān. The number of individual *majālis* in a garden varies between three (in the case of the third garden) and thirteen (fourth and tenth garden). At the end of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth garden, the author adds prayers in which he thanks God for the sultan's rule and beseechs the Almighty to show His grace toward al-Ghawrī.[59] Apart from these prayers, the very strict structure of the main part of the text is interrupted only in rare instances in which accounts of special events—such as the celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday,[60] the arrival of an important personality,[61] or the death of distinguished figures[62]—appear in the text.

The accounts of individual *majālis* are generally very similar in structure:[63] The introductory passage typically provides information on the number of the *majlis* in its *rawḍa*, its exact date, its venue, its duration, and the attending prayer leader (*imām*). Sometimes, information on other participants is included as well. After this introduction follows a series of numbered questions (sg. *suʾāl*) and answers (sg. *jawāb*).[64] While some *majālis* include only one or two questions, the third *majlis* of the second garden features twelve questions

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59   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 108, 143, 170–1, 228; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30, 55, 65–6, 108–9.
60   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 118–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38–50.
61   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 115–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 36.
62   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 41, 187, 202; (ed. ʿAzzām) 19, 75, 87.
63   See sections 4.2.2 and 6.2.3 below for translations of complete or largely complete *majālis*.
64   See also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 50.

and answers. More often than not, the people who pose and reply to a given question are identified by name. Typically, questions take up points raised by previous answers or refer to related aspects of the same topic, thus giving the impression that they are part of actual conversations. Therefore, it is usually possible to identify one or two main topics of a given *majlis*, as is indicated above in table 3.1.[65]

Sometimes, riddles (sg. *lughz*) and short narrative units (referred to as *ḥikāya*, *durra*, or *nādira*)[66] that usually pertain to a topic previously discussed take the place of one or several questions in a given *majlis*. The account of almost every *majlis* ends with two concluding passages: First, a short narrative or aphorism introduced by the phrase "what is fitting" (*munāsib*) is presented as a comment on a previously discussed topic of the *majlis*. Thereafter, a second, final remark (*khātima*) follows—this is usually a pertinent aphorism attributed to a historical figure, or an anecdote. While the other parts of the account of a given *majlis* are clearly intended as a representation of the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's salons, this claim is never raised for the *munāsib* and *khātima* passages. Moreover, the fact that the contents of these *munāsib* and *khātima* passages are never taken up or referred to by anyone who is reported to have attended a given *majlis* indicates that these passages are in fact later insertions by the author, intended to educate and entertain his readers. Furthermore, in one passage al-Ghawrī is said to have ended a *majlis* with a specific statement.[67] Nevertheless, the text still includes a *munāsib* and a *khātima* passage after the sultan's words, both of which come, in this case, in the form of rather lengthy anecdotes.[68] If we assume that these anecdotes were indeed shared by someone attending the *majlis* after the sultan had officially signaled its end, we would have to explain why this person dared to openly challenge the ruler's authority by opposing his signal that the session had ended. Thus, it seems certain that the *munāsib* and *khātima* passages were added by al-Sharīf to the material that, according to his claims, came from the *majālis* themselves.

From a broader perspective, the general structure of the main part of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is entirely shaped by chronological criteria: At its highest level of ordering—that of the gardens—, the months of the Islamic calendar serve as the main classification criterion for the arrangement of its contents. At the second level—that of the *majālis*—exact chronological information is

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65   See section 4.2 on the fields of knowledge to which the questions pertain.
66   See section 4.2.5 on these terms.
67   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ms) 253; (ed. ʿAzzām) 130.
68   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ms) 253–5.

provided for each section. Moreover, the few accounts of special events that are inserted into the text outside the otherwise strictly observed *rawḍa-majlis* structure also come with exact information as to their respective date.

How can we explain this strict chronological order of the text? Given the absence of any explicit statement by the author, all explanations remain speculative. Nevertheless, four possible and mutually non-exclusive reasons come to mind: First, the chronological structure of the text makes it easy to read and navigate, thus contributing greatly to its clarity. Second, if we accept the author's claim that his work includes accounts of the salons convened by al-Ghawrī during the ten months between Ramaḍān 910 and Shaʿbān 911,[69] a chronological ordering of the proceedings of these *majālis* might have appeared self-evident to al-Sharīf, especially if he based his accounts on notes he might have taken during or after attending these courtly events. Third, a strict chronological arrangement of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* fits well with the conventions of the literary genre to which it belongs, as is discussed below.[70] Fourth, the author himself might have been interested in recording the exact date of some of the events in the *majālis* that directly affected his own social and economic status, as becomes clear shortly.

The final section of the work starts with an epilogue, called *khātimat al-kitāb*. It begins with a supplication by the author in which he asks God to perpetuate the reign of al-Ghawrī.[71] In the first lines of this plea to the Almighty, the author refers to himself as "the composer (*muḥarrir*) of this book and the reporter of this agreeable discourse (*muqarrir hādhā al-khiṭāb al-mustaṭāb*), the poor servant [...] Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī."[72] After the supplication, the author presents a conventional apology (*iʿtidhār*) in which he begs his readers to pardon the mistakes and oversights in his work, and then asks for God's forgiveness.[73]

The next paragraph of the epilogue bears the heading *ṣūrat al-qiṣṣa*, which can be translated somewhat loosely as "the form of [my] petition."[74] As this passage is quite important for understanding the origin of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, it is translated here in full:

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69   See section 3.1.5 below on this claim.
70   See section 3.1.4 below.
71   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145.
72   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145.
73   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145–6.
74   For *qiṣṣa* as "petition" in the Mamluk period, cf., e.g., Sijepesteijn, Troubles 359; Pellat, Ḳiṣṣa 186–7. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 202; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalāʾid*, fol. 30ᵛ.

Then, I sent a piece of writing (*kitāb*) through (*ʿalā yad*) the lord of the merchants in the world, the generous and liberal one, the most honorable of the servants of God in the presence of the greatest sultan of the lands of God, *khawājā*[75] Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād Allāh—may God increase his excellence and perfection. It [that is, the piece of writing] included a Quranic verse [and read]:

"I am in any case a sinner

and what the revealed law dictates is obligatory

But if you want, forgive us what

we've committed, and if you want, punish [us].

God Most High said in His Noble Book: 'And if You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise.' [Q 5:118]

The intercessor of the sinners, and the friend of those who are repentant [that is, Muḥammad] said: 'For every thing, there is an expedient (*ḥīla*), and the expedient for sins is repentance.'[76]

Oh sultan of sultans (*sulṭān al-salāṭīn*), oh shadow of God on earth,[77] oh you who are clement [even] if you are wrathful, oh noblest of the rulers of non-Arabs and Arabs, forgive me my sin, and pardon my shortcoming!"[78]

After this a new section begins; it bears the heading "from the poetry of His Excellency (*ḥaḍra*) al-Ghawrī—may God Most High let him triumph."[79] It consists of three poems and a quotation of the Quranic verse 2:286 introduced by a supplication to God for forgiveness. The same topic also dominates two of three poems. The first one, which consists of just four Arabic hemistiches asking for God's pardon, is part of a longer poem included in a collection of verses attributed to al-Ghawrī and discussed in more detail below.[80] The third much longer poem covering one and a half pages in the manuscript has the same topic, but is written in a mixture of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish rather than only Arabic

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75 For *khawājā* as an honorific for high-profile merchants, see Petry, *Protectors* 129; Hanna, *Entrepreneurs* 111; Hanna, *Money* 194; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 55; Apéllaniz, *News* 2; Shoshan, *Damascus* 53, 97, 102; Barker, *Merchandise* 181.

76 This saying is not included in this form in the standard *ḥadīth* collections.

77 On this title, see section 6.2.2.

78 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 269–70; (ed. ʿAzzām) 146.

79 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 270; (ed. ʿAzzām) 147.

80 See section 3.2.7 below. The respective verses are found in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 270; (ed. ʿAzzām) 147; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubarāk*, fol. 68ᵛ.

and is included in one of the modern editions of al-Ghawrī's Ottoman Turkish poetry.[81] The second poem is not written by, but addressed to al-Ghawrī, praising his rule and asking for his forgiveness. Based on its resemblance to other parts of the final part of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in terms of content and the fact that the section to which it belongs begins with "I say" (*aqūlu*),[82] it seems plausible to attribute it to al-Sharīf.

It is clear that several elements of the final part of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* require contextualization and explanation, which are undertaken in the following section. Properly understood, however, this part of the work provides us with most valuable information on its genesis and author.

3.1.1.3 Authorship, Context of Origin, and Intended Readership

Since we know of no other work from the late Mamluk and early Ottoman period that mentions a Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, everything we can say about him must be gleaned from the pages of his work.[83] However, as *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is written from the perspective of a first-person narrator who is directly involved in the events he recounts and is explicitly identified as the author, the work is a rather rich source on al-Ḥusaynī.[84]

Al-Ḥusaynī usually appears as "al-Sharīf" in his work. This designation shows that he claimed to be able to trace his lineage back to the Prophet Muḥammad through—as is indicated by his *nisba*—the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 61/680). Moreover, al-Sharīf explicitly asserts his descent from the Prophet in a passage of his work in which he tells al-Ghawrī, who had inquired about al-Sharīf's travels, that he had never visited the territory of the Kurds because whenever a descendant of Muḥammad (a *sharīf*)[85] enters their lands, they first treat him with the highest honors, but then seek to kill him in order to build a magnificent mausoleum (*turba*) over his grave.[86] In the same pas-

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81   See section 3.3.1 below. The poem is found in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 271–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 148–9; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânu* 154–5; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubarāk*, fols. 78ʳ– 79ᵛ; Zajączkowski, Poezje 78–9. On it, see also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 26.

82   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 270; (ed. ʿAzzām) 147.

83   On him and his reasons for composing his work, see also Mauder, Read.

84   On narrator figures in Arabic dialogical texts, see Forster, *Wissensvermittlung*.

85   On this term, see van Arendonk and Graham, S̲h̲arīf, esp. 329–32; and for the Mamluk period, see van Ess, *Träume* 6. For the respect accorded to *sharīf*s, see, e.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 438–9.

86   On the image of the Kurds in Mamluk texts, see Conermann, Volk; and on that of *sharīf*s, see Morimoto, Family. On *sharīf* status as symbolic capital, see Morimoto, Introduction 2.

sage, we also learn that by Jumādā II 911/November 1505 al-Sharīf had not yet performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.[87]

Nevertheless, according to his work, al-Sharīf was already a well-traveled man by the time he took part in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. While his exact place of birth is not known, his work indicates that he hailed from the *bilād al-ʿajam*,[88] a term which literally means "land of the non-Arabs."[89] Here, however, it seems to refer more specifically to the territory of the Turkmen dynasty of the Qarā Qoyunlu (Black Sheep),[90] whose leader is referred to in the same passages as *sulṭān al-ʿajam*. The Qarā Qoyunlu ruled during the latter part of the second half of the eighth/fourteenth and much of the ninth/fifteenth centuries over an area that included parts of eastern Anatolia, the eastern part of modern Iraq, and most of Iran.[91]

Several further points confirm that al-Sharīf hailed from this region. Upon al-Ghawrī's request, he described the "salons (*majālis*) of the sultans of the non-Arabs"[92] in which he had participated, thus suggesting that at least at one point of his life, al-Sharīf had access to the ruling elite of his home region. Moreover, his linguistic skills also fit well with his assumed geographic origin. The contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* demonstrate that al-Sharīf was literate in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. His work includes, for example, a short Ottoman Turkish chronogram poem written by al-Sharīf on the occasion of the death of one of al-Ghawrī's sons during an outbreak of the plague.[93]

Al-Sharīf's Persian language skills are clear in several instances. Among other things, he is able to explain to the sultan that the sweetmeat that Arabic-speakers call *fālūdaj*[94] is known as *pālūda*[95] in Persian.[96] Elsewhere, he quotes a Persian couplet by the Timurid ruler Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 875–912/1470–

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87   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 203–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 88. On al-Sharīf's lineage, see also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 48.

88   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 221; (ed. ʿAzzām) 101.

89   On the meaning of *ʿajam* and *ʿajamī* in the late Mamluk period, see also, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, Fire 287; Flemming, Perser 82–4.

90   On Turkmens as *ʿajam*, see Flemming, Perser 84.

91   Sümer, Ḳarā-Ḳoyunlu 584–8. On al-Sharīf's area of origin, see also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 48; and on the significance of Persianate places of origin in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see Mauder, Persian 391–2.

92   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 105.

93   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 48; 21. On the poem, see Frenkel, Nations 68–9; Flemming, Nacht-gesprächen 26. On the death of al-Ghawrī's son, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 77–8.

94   Wehr, *Dictionary* 692, gives *fālūdhaj*.

95   A "kind of sweet beverage made of water, flour and honey (according to others, a mixture of grated apples with sugar and cardamoms)," Steingass, *Dictionary* 233.

96   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 253; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 25.

1506).[97] Moreover, al-Sharīf once argues in favor of the assumption that the Prophet Muḥammad spoke *ʿajamī*, a term usually understood as denoting the Persian language.[98] It stands to reason that a Muslim who spoke this language—possibly as his mother tongue, as we see shortly—would have been interested in raising its prestige by asserting that the Prophet knew it.[99]

The language and style of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, including its sections in rhymed prose[100] or verse, demonstrate that al-Sharīf had an advanced knowledge of Arabic. However, his command of it was sometimes far from perfect. The text includes various formulations that do not adhere to the rules of classical *ʿarabiyya* and indicate that Arabic was not al-Sharīf's native language. While some linguistic and orthographic peculiarities, such as the common replacement of *hamza* with its carrier (thus, for example, *sharāyiʿ* instead of *sharāʾiʿ*[101]) or the inclusion of vocabulary from the Egyptian dialect (such as, for example, *ēsh* for "what"[102]), are not atypical for texts from the late Mamluk period, other of al-Sharīf's idiosyncrasies surely are. Among other things, in many passages of his work an attributive adjective is made definite with the article *al-*, whereas the corresponding substantive is not. To name only the most obvious example, the author called his work *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya*[103] instead of *Nafāʾis **al**-majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq **al**-asrār al-Qurʾāniyya*.[104] Moreover, he does not always use the feminine form of adjectives that pertain to things in the plural, such as, for example,

97   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134. See also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 49. The verses are included in poem no. 56 of Ḥusayn Bāyqarā's *dīwān*, cf. Bāyqarā, *Dīwān* 56.

98   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 81.

99   On the usually negative connotations of Persian in Arabic literature, see Zadeh, *Vernacular* 74–6.

100   On rhymed prose as a demonstration of an author's language skills, see Freimark, *Vorwort* 14, 113, 162.

101   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7. Further examples include al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7: *rās* instead of *raʾs*, 247: *ʿaqāyiq* for *ʿaqāʾiq*.

102   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181, 195, 231; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72, 80, 112. On this typically Egyptian interrogative pronoun, see Badawi and Hinds, *Dictionary* 46. Further examples include al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 197; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83: *jābūhūm* for "they brought them"; (MS) 203; (ed. ʿAzzām) 88: *Anta ḥajjīt?* for "Did you make the pilgrimage?"; (MS) 225: *li-ēsh* for "why?"; (MS) 260; (ed. ʿAzzām) 137: *fī ayn* [= *fēn*] for "where." On the last two examples in general, see Badawi and Hinds, *Dictionary* 184–5, 680.

103   It is unclear whether al-Sharīf sought to allude to the title of the anthology *Majālis al-nafāʾis* by ʿAlī Shīr Nawāʾī (d. 906/1501), on which see, e.g., Subtelny, *Circles*, esp. 19, 21–31; Lingwood, *Politics* 32–3.

104   On this point see also ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 49; D'hulster, *Sitting* 239. Further examples of similar constructions include al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 4: *fawāʾid majālis al-sulṭānī wa-farāʾid nafāyis nikāt al-Qurʾānī* instead of *fawāʾid al-majālis al-sulṭāniyya wa-farāʾid nafāʾis al-*

al-kalimāt al-qabīḥ instead of *al-kalimāt al-qabīḥa*.[105] While these recurring peculiarities are inexplicable if the author was a native speaker of Arabic, they make sense for a person whose first language was not Arabic, but Persian or a form of Turkic, especially since neither of these languages features a demonstrative article or grammatical genders.

Two further points make it very probable that al-Sharīf's first language was Persian. First, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām included in his partial edition of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* several footnotes which demonstrate that some of the more idiosyncratic passages in the work can be explained as more or less literate translations of Persian expressions.[106] Second, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* features several isolated Persian words and Persianisms in otherwise consistently Arabic parts of the text. For example, Alexander the Great uses the Persian expression *darwīsh-i darwīshān*, which can be translated here as "[I am] the poorest of the poor" in one of the *munāsib* passages added by the author.[107] Moreover, al-Sharīf once has the sultan address him with the words "*Yā ʿadūw ṣāḥib al-Kashshāf, yā dushman-i al-Zamakhsharī* (Oh you enemy [Arabic word] of the author of the *Kashshāf*, oh you enemy [Persian word] of al-Zamakhsharī)."[108] These Persianisms disseminated throughout text and the concomitant absence of comparable Turkic expressions suggest that al-Sharīf's first language was Persian, although there is no definitive proof for this conclusion.

Another point that speaks in favor of al-Sharīf's cultural, if not necessarily linguistic, Persian background is the content of his work and here especially the *munāsib* and *khātima* passages he inserted. Most of these passages—and here especially those that are anecdotes or aphorisms—are heavily influenced by Iranian culture. In the case of the anecdotes, figures of Persianate history and pre-Islamic Iranian mythology as immortalized in the *Shāhnāme* appear prominently, while in the case of aphorisms, Persian rulers and wise men of the past are the most important authorities quoted.[109] Based on the criterion of the person associated with a given passage alone, almost every second *khātima* and slightly more than every third *munāsib* passage can be considered as attesting

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nikāt al-Qurʾāniyya (note also the masculine form of the adjectives and the missing *hamza* in *nafāyis*).

105   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 157. See also the preceding footnote.

106   See ʿAzzām's comments on al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 157; (ed. ʿAzzām) 60; (ms) 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61; (ms) 174; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68; (ms) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 80.

107   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 247; (ed. ʿAzzām) 126.

108   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 273; (ed. ʿAzzām) 141. See also section 4.2.2 below.

109   See also Irwin, Literature 28. On the significance of this kind of cultural capital at al-Ghawrī's court, see Mauder, Persian 388–90.

to the Persian cultural background of the work. This strong Persianate character of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is unmatched among the texts known to have originated from al-Ghawrī's court and further underlines the influence of al-Sharīf's cultural background and identity on his work.

While al-Sharīf at no time makes an explicit statement as to his *madhhab* and although his work shows that he was knowledgeable in the teachings of all four Sunni schools of law, the Ḥanafī school is usually mentioned first and in the greatest level of detail in discussions about the various *madhhab*s, and this suggests that he himself might have been a Ḥanafī.[110] This would fit well with al-Sharīf's origin from a region in the eastern Islamicate world, where the majority of the population belonged to this school of law.[111]

Even if we cannot conclude with absolute certainty to which *madhhab* al-Sharīf belonged, it is clear that he was a Sunni, as this is, for example, attested to by his inclusion of a poem praising the first four caliphs.[112] His Sunni identity might well have informed his decision to leave his home region: In 907/1501, the Shiʿi Safawid ruler Shāh Ismāʿīl conquered Tabrīz and put an end to Sunni hegemony in the region. Over the course of the following years, Shāh Ismāʿīl succeeded in bringing under his sway a significant portion of the previously Sunni-ruled territories in what is today Iran and Iraq.[113] Inhabitants of the region, including scholars and artisans, who could not or did not want to align themselves with the new overlords therefore emigrated to other parts of the Islamicate world, including Mamluk-ruled Syria and Egypt.[114] It is a plausible, though unproven, possibility that al-Sharīf came to Cairo as part of this migration process, especially since, in the time of al-Ghawrī, Iranian immigrants found almost perfect conditions in which to settle. Ibn Iyās noted that the sultan "was inclined toward the Persians (*abnāʾ al-ʿajam*),"[115] while a biographical work from the early Ottoman period speaks about the unusual closeness

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110   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 11, 62, 103, 107, 138, 159, 220, 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 10, 100, 105–6.

111   On the eastward spread of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, see Heffening and Schacht, Ḥanafiyya 163.

112   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 271; (ed. ʿAzzām) 149.

113   Cf. Roemer, Safavid Period 212–20.

114   Flemming, Turks 718. See also Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 175; Berger, *Gesellschaft* 161–3; and more critically Markiewicz, *Crisis* 67–74. See also Lellouch, *Ottomans* 83–5, on the influx of Turkic-speakers; Petry, *Elite* 61, 67–8, on the influx of Persian members of the civilian elite; and Petry, *Underworld* 260–2; Petry, Patterns, 173–4; Fernandes, Politics 96, for the local population's stance toward them.

115   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 88. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 38; Flemming, Perser 82; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24. For another relevant passage, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 481–2.

between al-Ghawrī and Persian members of his court.[116] In light of this and other evidence, Doris Behrens-Abouseif concludes that "[o]ne of the features of al-Ghawrī's court life was his predilection for the *aʿjām*, who were numerous in his entourage."[117]

According to his work, al-Sharīf managed to establish a relationship of benefit patronage with the sultan and apparently also enjoyed, at least temporarily, the latter's protective patronage. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presents al-Sharīf as a member of the inner circle of al-Ghawrī's court who regularly participated in the sultan's *majālis*. Moreover, the account of the third *majlis* of Rabīʿ I 911 includes the following sentence preceded by the highlighted word *inʿām* (benefaction): "His Excellency the sultan lodged me (*nazzalanī*) in the Ghawriyya Madrasa and gave me a position as a Sufi (*waẓīfat al-taṣawwuf*) there."[118]

The *madrasa* to which the text refers is part of al-Ghawrī's endowed funeral complex discussed in more detail below. The endowment deed for this complex stipulated the employment of 100 Sufis, who were to perform daily religious practices, including Quranic recitations and prayers, for the founder's benefit. Sufis who, apart from their participation in these practices, had no additional responsibilities received a monthly stipend of 300 *dirham*s. Such stipends for Sufis were not unusual given that, as Leonor Fernandes notes, "[f]rom the 14th century, Sufism and attendance of Sufi rituals had become the equivalent of any wazifa (appointment, position), which provided a regular pay."[119] According to the endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's complex, those eligible for this *waẓīfa* were selected and paid by the superintendent (*nāẓir*) of the foundation,[120] an office that had to be held by the founder; however, he could delegate his daily duties to two deputies.[121]

Based on the information from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and the endowment deed, we can conclude that al-Ghawrī appointed al-Sharīf as one of the Sufis who received a stipend from his endowment.[122] Nevertheless, things clearly did not develop as al-Sharīf had wished. In the account of the second

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116   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1 48–9.
117   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 73. On the sultan's affinity to *al-ʿajam* and Persianate culture, see also Mauder, Persian, esp. 395–8; Flemming, Perser; D'hulster, Sitting; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 38; Frenkel, Nations 69; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 214; Irwin, Thinking 39; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts, *passim*.
118   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 115; (ed. ʿAzzām) 36.
119   Fernandes, *Evolution* 2. See also Fernandes, *Evolution* 54.
120   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 108–9.
121   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 112.
122   See also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 77. Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24, assumes that al-Sharīf

majlis of Jumādā II, that is, about three months after his appointment as one of the Sufis of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, al-Sharīf asked for the sultan's permission to leave Cairo, ostensibly to go on the pilgrimage. During the ensuing conversation, the sultan assumed that the real reason for al-Sharīf's request was that he was bankrupt (*muflis*). Al-Sharīf denied this, but noted that he had not yet received a single coin from his position as Sufi in the sultan's *madrasa*. The sultan thereupon confirmed al-Sharīf's appointment. The latter then turned to the *nāẓir al-jaysh* (superintendent of the army) ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qaṣrawī (d. 922/1516)[123] and said: "Listen, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Qādir, I am among the hundred." When the sultan inquired about the meaning of this statement, al-Sharīf explained that ʿAbd al-Qādir had doubted that he really belonged to "the hundred," that is, the Sufis affiliated to al-Ghawrī's funeral complex. The sultan thereupon increased al-Sharīf's stipend by half a *dirham* per day.[124]

If al-Sharīf had indeed considered leaving Cairo for monetary reasons alone, his strategy obviously paid off, for he not only managed to have his appointment confirmed, after it had been doubted by members of al-Ghawrī's financial administration, but he also obtained an increase in his stipend. Yet, this passage also points to the structural dependency between al-Sharīf and his patron. This is of fundamental importance to our understanding of why al-Sharīf wrote *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[125]

Throughout the text, al-Sharīf demonstrates his erudition and competency in various areas of intellectual and scholarly activity. First, the work bears witness to its author's linguistic skills in the three most important languages of the Islamicate world of the late middle period. While al-Sharīf only hints at his knowledge of Persian and Ottoman Turkish by including appropriate verses or references to rare terms, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as a whole is a demonstration of the author's competence in Arabic, the most important scholarly and literary language of the Mamluk realm. This becomes especially clear from al-Sharīf's efforts to embellish particularly prominent parts of the work through the use of rhymed prose and the inclusion of Arabic poems from his own pen in the work.

Moreover, throughout the text al-Sharīf consciously styled himself as a man who is well-versed in various fields of worldly and religious knowledge (*ʿilm*).

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was appointed to the much more lucrative position of *shaykh* of al-Ghawrī's *madrasa*. There is no evidence to support this assumption.

123   On him, see appendix 2.

124   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 205–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 90–1.

125   The following discussion of al-Sharīf's intentions builds on Lake, Intention. See also Bauer, Communication, esp. 44, 53.

After Sultan al-Ghawrī, the first-person narrator appears as the second most important participant (at least among those identified by name) in the sultan's scholarly debates. He is presented as especially knowledgeable in matters of *fiqh*,[126] but is also portrayed as able to give competent answers to questions concerning prophetic traditions,[127] Quranic exegesis,[128] stories of the prophets,[129] theology and creed,[130] medicine,[131] history,[132] and geography.[133] Thus, by conflating its author with its first-person narrator,[134] *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presents al-Sharīf as a learned man whose knowledge rivaled, if not surpassed, that of the other participants in the sultan's *majālis*, some of whom were among the most noted *ʿulamāʾ* of the late Mamluk period.[135]

Yet, al-Sharīf not only portrayed himself as an intellectual equal of the leading *ʿulamāʾ* of his time; he also exhibited in his work skills that were expected from an educated man of letters whose writings should be both entertaining and edifying, by pleasantly mixing earnestness (*jidd*) with jest (*hazl*).[136] This fundamental stylistic feature of premodern Arabic literature is often associated with the multifaceted concept of *adab* discussed in more detail below.[137] It suffices here to mention the *munāsib* and *khātima* passages of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in which al-Sharīf sought to demonstrate his status as a man of letters (*adīb*) by including verses and passages in rhymed prose, thus demonstrating his competence in prose writing (*inshāʾ al-nathr*) and the composition of poetry (*qarḍ al-shiʿr*).[138] Moreover, the contents of these passages often point to a Persianate cultural background and transmitted knowledge about politics and statecraft, which was an important element of an *adīb*'s repertoire, at

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126 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 8, 11, 22–3, 25, 68, 73–5, 90; (ed. ʿAzzām) 7, 10, 18–9; and *passim*.

127 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 16–7, 156–7, 222; (ed. ʿAzzām) 103.

128 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 31–2, 39, 44–5, 50, 96.

129 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 55, 261–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 138–9.

130 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 58, 86, 88, 98–9, 188; (ed. ʿAzzām) 27.

131 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 103–4.

132 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 134, 145–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 53, 56.

133 See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 203–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 88.

134 On the triad author-narrator-character in premodern Arabic literature, see Behzadi, Guidance, esp. 218–9.

135 On scholars participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see sections 4.1.2.2 and 4.1.2.3 below.

136 On this expectation, cf. Van Gelder, Mixtures [both parts]. See also, e.g., Griffel and Hachmeier, Prophets 254; Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 45; Pellat, Adab 441; Pellat, al-Djidd; Fähndrich, Begriff 334, 337–8; Freimark, *Vorwort* 64; Pökel, Earnest 118–24.

137 E.g., van Gelder, Mixtures 85; Khalidi, *Thought* 130.

138 On these disciplines as necessary for an *adīb*, cf. Heinrichs, Einführung 26.

least from ʿAbbasid times.[139] Other passages prove that al-Sharīf's literary stock of knowledge included anecdotal and aphoristic material that was suited to be part of a witty conversation.[140]

Why was al-Sharīf interested in demonstrating his competence in these fields, and for what reasons did he try to foreground his intellectual contributions to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*? In answering these questions, it is helpful to utilize the set of theoretical tools outlined above.[141] In writing *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf performed a communicative act through which he signaled that he possessed a considerable amount of cultural capital.[142] Moreover, he pointed to earlier instances, in the context of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, in which he had demonstrated his possession of this kind of capital. Yet, al-Sharīf not only drew attention to the fact that he possessed this capital, he also signaled his readiness to exchange it. His references to the acts of benefit patronage he had received from al-Ghawrī made clear that he had done so in the past. Through these acts of benefit patronage, the sultan had provided him with economic capital (the stipend al-Sharīf received as a holder of a *waẓīfat al-taṣawwuf* in the sultan's endowment complex) and had also bestowed on him social capital (that is, al-Sharīf's recognized position as paid client in the sultan's service). In exchange, the sultan profited from al-Sharīf's accumulated cultural capital, which the latter shared during the ruler's *majālis*. The exchange character of al-Ghawrī's relationship with al-Sharīf is especially clear in the passage in which the author threatened to leave the ruler's presence, thus putting an end to al-Ghawrī's access to his cultural capital. As we saw, al-Ghawrī was not willing to forego his exchange relationship with al-Sharīf and therefore increased the amount of economic capital the latter received.

In writing *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf signaled that he still considered himself al-Ghawrī's client and that he wanted to open a new chapter in his exchange and patronage relationship with the Mamluk sultan, for whose benefit he was willing and able to use his cultural capital. As he makes clear at the beginning of the work, his skills and expertise allowed him to present al-Ghawrī as a knowledgeable and wise sultan—the "sultan of scholars" (*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ*) and "sultan of the insightful" (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*) of the preface—who represented the pinnacle of a long line of the world's greatest rulers. Throughout the text, al-Sharīf highlights al-Ghawrī's position by referring to him as "our lord the sultan" (*mawlānā l-sulṭān*), sometimes combining this title

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139   Bergé, al-Tawḥīdī 117.

140   On this qualification of an *adīb*, cf. Heinrichs, Einführung 26.

141   See sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 above.

142   On knowledge (*ʿilm*) as cultural capital, see Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 5–8, 22–3.

with even loftier forms of address. Through these and other means analyzed in more detail below,[143] *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and its author potentially contributed to the legitimation of al-Ghawrī's rule and thus rendered a tangible service to the sultan.

At the same time, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was also well suited to entertain and edify the ruler and its other readers. By subdividing the text into comparatively small units—the individual *majālis* in the *rawḍa*s—that deal with different topics, the author ensured that the contents of the works alternated between a variety of fields of learning, thereby saving his readers from fatigue. Moreover, the inclusion of witty aphorisms and enjoyable anecdotes at the end of each *majlis* further adds to the book's entertainment value.

Yet, the passages added by the author also contain many wise sayings, maxims, and other mirrors-for-princes material that represented the state of the art in terms of the political thinking of the late Mamluk age. Collected to educate those in power, this material was intended to meet the interests of the leading members of al-Ghawrī's court and the ruler himself, for whom statecraft and the exercise of rule was a daily business.[144]

Finally, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* preserved the memory of al-Ghawrī and his reign. Tellingly, the text itself contains a passage in which al-Ghawrī is reported to have narrated an anecdote about the Persian epic *Shāhnāme* commissioned by Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna. The beginning of this anecdote reads:

> Sultan Maḥmūd wanted his name to live on (*baqāʾ ismihi*) till the day of judgment. It was said to him: "Build high buildings!" But he said: "They go to ruins after 300 or 400 years." [Those present] then agreed that books should be written (*taṣnīfāt al-kutub*) in Sultan Maḥmūd's name. They then gave orders to compose the *Shāhnāme* […].[145]

According to this passage, the idea to compose books in order to immortalize the name of a ruler was current at al-Ghawrī's court. It stands to reason that this idea was also a motive for the writing of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.

The codicological evidence likewise speaks in favor of an interpretation that sees *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as originating from a context deeply shaped by practices of patronage: As outlined above, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is

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143   See sections 6.2.1 through 6.2.3 below.

144   On knowledge of statecraft as a "commodity much in demand" in the Islamicate middle period, see Khalidi, *Thought* 200.

145   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 195; (ed. ʿAzzām) 81. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Arts* 77–8; and section 4.2.5 below.

preserved in a single copy, the production of which must have consumed considerable resources. Yet, while it is clear that from the outset the manuscript was intended for the sultan's library, there is no evidence that it was commissioned by the ruler; this suggests that it may have been an offering to the sultan in an effort to secure his support.[146]

A final piece of evidence that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is a result of the patronage relationship between its author and the penultimate Mamluk ruler comes from the first sentence following its *khuṭba*. Here, al-Sharīf speaks about himself as "having been honored by service (*khidma*)" to al-Ghawrī. As discussed above, *khidma* is a central term in the description of patronage relations from the client's point of view.[147] The text thus suggests that al-Sharīf considered himself the ruler's client.

We do not know how—if at all—al-Sharīf was rewarded for composing *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and dedicating it to his patron al-Ghawrī. It is quite clear, however, that he hoped for some kind of compensation: not only did he praise the sultan's generosity (*sakhāwa*) in the preface of the work,[148] but he also dedicated considerable space to the ruler's previous generous acts toward him. The second *majlis* of Jumādā II consists almost exclusively of the account of a conversation between al-Sharīf and the ruler, at the end of which a significant pay raise was granted, as discussed above. However, the reward al-Sharīf sought was not necessarily limited to monetary capital:[149] Toward the end of the work, al-Sharīf included a passage in which al-Ghawrī suggests that he could make al-Sharīf part of his *khawāṣṣ*, that is, a member of one of the innermost circles of the sultan's court society.[150]

Thus, while we can conclude that al-Sharīf's main intention in writing *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was ensuring that he would continue to benefit from the sultan's patronage in general, a close reading of the text suggests that this was not his only intention. At least three further motivations can be discerned: First, the immediate reason for dedicating his work to the sultan seems to relate to an earlier mistake, for which al-Sharīf felt obliged to apologize, as is clear from the long apologetic passages in the concluding passage of the work. The reason for this behavior can be found in the text itself: Over the course of the

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146   For a similar argument, see D'hulster, Caught 200.

147   See section 1.2.4 above.

148   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2. On offering advance praise of a patron's generosity, see, e.g., Gruendler, *Praise Poetry* 249–52, 258–61.

149   On monetary rewards in the context of literary productions at Islamicate courts, see, e.g., Bauer, Shāʿir 719; Gruendler, *Praise Poetry* 49.

150   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 140.

last three salons recounted, al-Sharīf was involved in a long and heated debate
about an issue of Quranic exegesis related to the interpretation of the Quranic
Sura Yūsuf and the value al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) Quran commentary *al-
Kashshāf* as an authority on religious questions.[151]

While the details of this debate as far as they pertain to the scholarly discip-
line of Quranic exegesis are analyzed in a later chapter,[152] here it is relevant to
note that, according to his work, in this debate al-Sharīf held a minority view
that was rejected by all the other scholars present. The sultan rebuked him for
this behavior with the words "Sharīf, it is not good (*malīḥ*) to oppose the com-
munity (*al-jamāʿa*)."[153] Yet, al-Sharīf persisted in his opposition to the generally
held opinion, although the sultan even threatened to cut off his beard and thus
disgrace him openly.[154] When, because of al-Sharīf's persistence, the argument
over the same question went on for the third consecutive *majlis*, the sultan
became extremely angry and ordered the expulsion (*ṭard*) of all *majlis* parti-
cipants.[155]

The sultan's summary dismissal of the participants posed a significant threat
to al-Sharīf's status as the sultan's client. By banning him from his presence, al-
Ghawrī had effectively blocked the way through which al-Sharīf had rendered
his service to the ruler and solicited benefit patronage from him. The final pages
of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* show how al-Sharīf reacted to this threat to his
status: On the one hand, he submitted to the ruler an account of his view of
the argument that had provoked the sultan's irritation. While it is impossible
to assess the objectivity of al-Sharīf's version of the events as we lack alternat-
ive sources, we should point out that al-Sharīf's text presents him as, at least,
contributing to the escalation of the conflict. Thus, al-Sharīf did not deny that
he was to blame, at least in part, for what had happened.

On the other hand, al-Sharīf humbled himself in front of the ruler, beg-
ging for his forgiveness, while affirming that he would accept any punishment
that the ruler considered appropriate. In the final passage of the work, al-
Sharīf clearly styled himself as a repentant sinner who longs for the sultan's
forgiveness. The ruler, in turn, is presented as being able to forgive al-Sharīf's
mistake. The sultan's ability to pardon or punish al-Sharīf is likened to that of
God Himself, first by way of a Quranic quotation that points to God's power to

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151   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 259–65; (ed. ʿAzzām) 135–43.
152   See section 4.2.2 below.
153   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 260; (ed. ʿAzzām) 136.
154   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 140.
155   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 265; (ed. ʿAzzām) 142–3. See also Berkey, Mamluks 173.

forgive and to castigate and second by the appellation "sultan of sultans" (*sulṭān al-salāṭīn*), which had appeared earlier in the text as an epithet of God.[156]

Given his dismissal from the sultan's presence, al-Sharīf could not present his request for the sultan's pardon directly. He therefore employed one *khawājā* Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād Allāh as an intermediary to submit his written petition for pardon to al-Ghawrī. We do not know much about this man, apart from the fact that he was among the government officials (*mubāshirūn*) who were deported to Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest of Cairo.[157] This would indicate that Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād Allāh had held an administrative post of some importance under the Mamluk regime and thus was probably able to present al-Sharīf's request to al-Ghawrī without too much difficulty. It is possible that the copy of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was handed to the sultan in a similar way, given that "[m]ore or less all texts […] of Mamluk literature were meant to be sent to someone after their completion."[158]

Al-Sharīf used *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* to do more than atone for his previous mistakes; he also used his work to discredit several of his adversaries among the sultan's court society, those who might have endangered his continuing patronage relationship with the ruler. We have seen how he included in his work a criticism of the financial administrator who had not believed that al-Sharīf belonged to the Sufis of the sultan's funeral complex. Al-Sharīf's efforts to cast those *majālis* participants who opposed him in debate in a negative light are much more pronounced. In recounting such incidents in which the first-person narrator quarreled with other disputants, the author's considerable agency[159] becomes particularly obvious from the words he chooses to structure his text. The contributions of his opponents are introduced by terms such as *mukābara* (haughtiness),[160] *jadal* (quarrel),[161] *mujādala* (wrangling),[162] *muh-*

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156   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1. This epithet also calls to mind the ancient Iranian title, "king of kings," which we know was applied to al-Ghawrī at least once, in a diplomatic letter, cf. Moukarzel, Embassies 698; Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

157   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 231. Later, Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād Allāh returned to Cairo and again became part of the local administration, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 358, 403. He died in or after 927/1521. Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 94, mentions him among the attendees of a scholarly discussion.

158   Bauer, Communication 29.

159   On "agency" in the analysis of premodern Arabic texts, see Hirschler, *Historiography*, esp. 1–6, 122.

160   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 221; (ed. ʿAzzām) 101.

161   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 222, 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 103, 106.

162   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 106.

mal (what is negligible),[163] *mujāzafa* (recklessness),[164] and even *kidhb* (lie),[165] or *hadhayān* (senseless jabber, delirium).[166] By contrast, the first-person narrator's contributions and those of the sultan are introduced with neutral or positive terms, such as *jawāb* (reply),[167] *radd* (answer),[168] *tanbīh* (counsel),[169] *taḥqīq* (rectification),[170] *marḥama* (act of benevolence),[171] *ḥikma* (wisdom),[172] and *durra* (pearl).[173] By using these kinds of words to introduce the contributions of the various participants, the author frames and directs the readers' understanding before they even have an opportunity to process the information that follows. Through this strategy, the author projects his own interpretation of the events without facing accusations that he had tampered with the actual contents of the conversations he recounted. This conscious use of well-selected introductory terms thus provided the author with considerable leeway in his descriptions of the events he witnessed.

Finally, al-Sharīf apparently also had a genuine vested interest in documenting the proceedings of the salons in which he participated. The diligence with which he recorded the date, venue, duration, and the attending prayer leader of every single *majlis* is reminiscent of historiographical works of the period and suggest that the author considered these events so important that detailed information about them should be preserved for posterity. The same applies to the author's care in recording exactly who said what at which point in the course of conversations during individual sessions. Al-Sharīf's accuracy in these matters can be explained, at least partly, by the importance some of the events—notably those that pertained to his own social and economic status—had for him personally.

Before ending our discussion of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, two further points deserve attention: the intended audience of the text and its sources.[174] As for the former, we can safely assume that the sultan and the members of

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163   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248.

164   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248.

165   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 249.

166   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 111 (written *hadayān*).

167   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 222–3, 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 103–4, 110; and *passim*.

168   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248.

169   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 250; (ed. ʿAzzām) 125.

170   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 223; (ed. ʿAzzām) 104.

171   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 203, 242; (ed. ʿAzzām) 88, 121, used for the sultan only.

172   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 208, 252, 257; (ed. ʿAzzām) 93, 129, 133, used for the sultan only.

173   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 143, 157, 231, 248; (ed. ʿAzzām) 54, 59, 112, used for the sultan only.

174   See section 3.2.4 below on the genre of the text. On intended readerships, see Lake, Intention 348–50.

his court were intended to be the main recipients of the text, given that it was written to ensure the ruler's ongoing patronage and that the only known manuscript of the work was produced for the sultan's library. There is no evidence that the text ever circulated in Mamluk times beyond this social group. Moreover, its contents, with their peculiar mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish elements, their edifying as well as entertaining character, and their focus on questions of rulership and statecraft, all point to an intended audience among the members of the political elite. Yet, the fact that the text was written in Arabic suggests that it was meant to be accessible not only to the mainly Turkic-speaking members of the Mamluk military elite, but also to civilian officials and notables. All of these groups might have been interested in the text to learn more about Mamluk courtly life under al-Ghawrī in general and about his *majālis* in particular, while also gaining insights into various fields of scholarship.

Moreover, a reception of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* within Mamluk court society was also in the interests of both its author and Sultan al-Ghawrī as its dedicatee. As Thomas Bauer showed with regard to literary works that emerged from courtly contexts, texts praising a ruler could only have their full effect if members of a significant audience took note of them. Thus, one should not consider these texts as a means of communication between their authors and their dedicatees only, but also include a—however broadly defined—public in the analysis of the communicative process. According to Bauer, this public was interested in these literary works as "objects of interest [and] entertainment."[175] Their literary and other qualities in turn added to their authors' reputations. Moreover, the process of reading or listening to works in praise of a ruler's virtues not only contributed to the public's esteem and loyalty toward the ruler, but also confirmed a set of values shared between the ruler and the ruled.[176]

Accordingly, al-Ghawrī must have been interested in having other people familiarize themselves with the text, in which al-Sharīf presents the sultan as a praiseworthy ruler and thereby confirms his exalted position and the legitimacy of his reign. Al-Sharīf, in turn, probably hoped for a wider audience of his work, in order to spread his fame as an author. Still, we must be careful not to conceive of the intended readership of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* too broadly: The text was primarily intended for recipients who, like its author and its dedicatee, were closely connected to the Mamluk court.

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175   Bauer, Shāʿir 719.
176   Bauer, Shāʿir 718–9. On the relation between poet, patron, and audience, see also Gruendler, *Praise Poetry* 9, 26.

An intriguing question is whether *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was thus written to be performed at court in one way or the other. Its sophisticated internal subdivisions, the resulting comparatively small textual subunits, and the frequent change of speakers in the text make it perfectly suited to be read aloud in long or short portions. Such recitations were a typical feature of premodern Islamicate court life.[177] Moreover, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* itself repeatedly refers to books that were or should be read aloud during the sultan's *majālis*, such as the popular epic *Sīrat Baybars* or *ḥadīth* collections on specific topics.[178] The first-person narrator discouraged the reading of the first work mentioned, based on the argument that if Sultan Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77) were still alive, he would have been more interested in hearing "the account (*sīra*) of the *majlis*" of al-Ghawrī.[179] The first-person narrator thus implied that the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were even more suitable for recitation in a ruler's *majlis* than *Sīrat Baybars*. Although this does not constitute definite proof that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was explicitly intended to be recited at a meeting of al-Ghawrī and his intimates, it shows that this idea was at least on the author's mind.

As for the sources of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we face a specific difficulty in trying to assess which older texts are quoted in the work: If we can accept the author's statement that his work is based on what was said and done during al-Ghawrī's salons—and there is good reason to do so, as is shown below[180]—we must assume that al-Sharīf cited his sources not directly, but only as they were quoted in oral conversations and possibly merely in summary form during the *majālis*.[181] Because of this situation and the resulting complications in identifying a given source, an exhaustive study of the intertextual relations between *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and earlier works is beyond the confines of the present study.[182] Nevertheless, appendix 1 provides a preliminary list of works that are cited or referred to in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. The subsequent chapters dealing with discussion topics of the *majālis* analyze the circumstances in which many of these works are quoted or referred to in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Almost all pertinent works were well-known scholarly texts of the Islamicate middle period, such as the canonical *ḥadīth* collections

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177   Shoshan, Popular Literature 350.

178   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16.

179   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16. See also Irwin, Thinking 44.

180   See section 3.2.5 below.

181   On the problem of the sources, see also Irwin, Thinking 43–4.

182   On intertextuality in Mamluk literature, see Bauer, Communication 35–44; Bauer, Literature 114.

of Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875),
Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1449) commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-
Zamakhsharī's Quran commentary, or widely read textbooks of (mainly Ḥana-
fī) *fiqh*. Hence it is unlikely that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* preserves any
older quoted textual material not found elsewhere. However, analyses of the
ways specific texts are dealt with in the scholarly debates narrated in the work
will help us to understand how members of the late Mamluk court availed
themselves of central elements of the Islamicate intellectual heritage and
relied upon them to tackle the questions and challenges of their time.

3.1.2   al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī

3.1.2.1   The Manuscript and Its Editions

Like *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is preserved in a unique
manuscript in the Ahmet III collection of the Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi in
Istanbul, bearing the shelf mark Ahmet III 1377. Apart from some secondary
entries, the text of the manuscript is almost completely in Arabic.[183] The title
al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī is given in the introduction of the text
in a partly voweled form and appears again in the colophon.[184] While the pat-
ron of the text is clearly identified already by its title, no part of the manuscript
includes explicit information on the author of the text. Although we can glean
some pieces of information on the latter's identity from the contents of the
work, the text should be considered an anonymous composition for the time
being.

The incipit of the text reads:

الحمد لله الذي نور بنور رحمته قلوب الملوك والسلاطين وطهر بماآ التوبة سواد وجوه المذنبين

والمجرمين ...

A digital reproduction of the manuscript obtained in late 2013 suggests that the
manuscript features a *lacuna* at its end, where it breaks off in the middle of a
sentence on page 306. As long as the manuscript is unavailable to direct phys-
ical examination, the reasons for this *lacuna* remain unclear. If it is a result of
physical damage, the respective incident must have happened during recent

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183   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 205 features the Persian word *khūb* (good) taken
       from another text. See section 4.2.7 below.

184   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4; 96. The first part of this title takes
       up a phrase from Q 24:35, which also appears in numerous other Arabic titles. See, e.g.,
       Irwin, Literature 5; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. iii, 939–40; Ambros, Beobachtungen
       23.

decades, as Karatay's catalogue from the 1960s lists the manuscript as having 337 pages;[185] this suggest a loss of about one-eleventh of its original size.[186] Fortunately, a major part of the lost section of the text is included in ʿAzzām's partial edition discussed below.[187] The partial edition also includes the colophon of the manuscript, which states that the volume in question is only the first part of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and that it was finished at the beginning of Rabīʿ II 919/ June 1513.[188]

The manuscript is written on finished paper of a creamy color. Its pages are 275 mm × 180 mm in size, with the written area measuring 200 mm in height and 130 mm in width. Each page features seventeen lines.[189] The page numbers are in an Ottoman hand and are written in the inner upper corner of every page. Two unnumbered flyleaves precede the text block. Catchwords are located in the lower left corner of every other page, with the exception of page 4.

The manuscript was written by a single person. The main text is in fairly regular and very readable *naskh*. Highlighted introductory parts and a few other selected words such as the name of the patron and the *basmala* on the second page are larger than the main text and partly in *thuluth* (see fig. 3.2). All letters are fully pointed, vowel marks appear only very rarely.

The main text is black. Gold ink is used on pages 2–85 for about 50 percent of the highlighted words, most textual dividers, and all words written in *thuluth* that do not mark the beginning of sections. The remainder of the highlighted words and dividers in this section are in red. From page 86 onward, all elements of the text that are not black are in red. Textual dividers usually take the form of large round dots. The manuscript does not feature painted decorations or illuminations.

The leather binding of the volume, which appears to be original, is noteworthy for its bright red color. Both covers and the flap are decorated with a gold frame with gold floral corner pieces. In the middle between each of the corner pieces, there is a large gold dot close to the inner margin of the frame.

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185   Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 169.

186   Karatay's data are more or less corroborated by a secondary entry on the front flyleaf, which speaks of 338 pages (sg. *ṣaḥīfa*), cf. Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), fol. 1ʳ.

187   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 89–96. Based on the length of the *lacuna* and a comparison between ʿAzzām's edition of the text and the original manuscript, we can estimate that the edition preserved at least 50 percent of the lost text.

188   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 96. See also Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 169. The date is confirmed in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 269–70; (ed. ʿAzzām) 84–5.

189   Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 169.

FIGURE 3.2 Pages 2 and 3 of Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377

A gold framed mandorla with two pendants is located in the center of each cover. An arabesque pattern with inlaid gold dots is impressed on both the mandorla and its pendants, as is typical for Weisweiler type 96.[190] The inner side of the board is covered with green paper. The state of preservation of the manuscript is, in general, fairly good, with only very limited signs of wear and tear of its binding.

The front flyleaves and the first two pages of the textblock feature numerous secondary entries. Ten lines of Ottoman Turkish poetry that address the relationship between humans and God and the topic of mystical love are written on the recto of the first flyleaf.[191] Further below, another hand added the following note in Arabic:

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190   Weisweiler, *Bucheinband* 55, plates 38–9.

191   For an edition of the poem and linguistic comments, see Flemming, Stand 1158, 1161.

Yā layta muttu qabla hādhā wa-kuntu
nasīyan mansīyan wa-lā raʾaytu hādhā
fī dār al-dunyā.

If I had only died before this and would
forget what should be forgotten, and had not seen this
in this world.[192]

Below these lines on the same page, we find the shelf mark "Taṣawwuf 24 1377," the second number of which corresponds to the present-day call number of the manuscript. Finally, the recto side of the first flyleaf contains a note in pencil stating that the manuscript has 338 pages.

   The only entry on the verso side of the first flyleaf is noteworthy, as it was written by the same person who wrote the textblock, and is in the same red and gold ink as used in the remainder of the manuscript. Thus, this entry is most probably not a secondary entry in the strict sense, but rather an original part of the manuscript. Its first three lines are written in red ink, are in Arabic, and read:

Nastashfiʿ bi-kalām qiblat al-mulūk wa-qudwat al-salāṭīn
sulṭān al-islām wa-l-muslimīn ʿazza naṣruhu kamā qāla
taʿālā wa-l-kāẓimīn al-ghayẓ wa-l-ʿāfīn ʿan al-nās wa-Llāh yuḥibb al-
   muḥsinīn.

We seek intercession through the words of the *qibla* of the rulers and
   the model of the sultans
the sultan of Islam and the Muslims—may his victory be glorious—
   as the
Exalted One said: "[Those] who restrain their anger and pardon
   people—God loves those who do good." (Q 3:134)[193]

Directly thereafter the following Ottoman Turkish verses appear:

Çün liḳā mihrinden oldı ẕerrece ilḳā bize
Tan-mı dūzah görinürse cennet ül-Meʾvā bize?[194]
Gözlerüm yaşına raḥmet yā Raḥīm

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192   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), fol. 1ʳ.
193   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), fol. 1ᵛ.
194   For these two lines, see also Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 90; Yalçın (ed. and

Sāyili redd eylemez hergiz Kerīm.[195]
Sen cemālın üsterüz cennet nedir?
Görünür cenneti bize onsız caḥīm.

As from the happiness[196] of meeting [God on the day of judgment] an
    atom was cast upon us,
Does it astonish if hell appears as paradise to us?[197]
[Have] mercy on the tears of my eyes, oh Merciful!
The Gracious One never rejects one who beseeches Him.
Longing for Your beauty, what is paradise?
Without it [that is, Your beauty], paradise appears as hell to us.[198]

On the recto of the second front flyleaf, we find a note consisting of the title
of the work in Arabic script and the abbreviation "Br. S. II. 13" in pink Latin let-
ters. This abbreviation stands for "Br[ockelmann] S[upplement] II. [volume]
[page] 13" and indicates the reference to *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in Carl Brockel-
mann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur.*

The first page features four entries. In its upper right corner, a blue seal
impression indicates the modern-day shelf mark of the manuscript in Latin
letters. On the left of this seal impression, the word *taṣawwuf* in Arabic letters
probably refers to the subject area under which the manuscript was shelved. In
the upper left corner, we find the same unreadable short cursive note described
above in the case of Ahmet III 2680. The remainder of the first page is covered
by a long secondary entry of 26 lines in Arabic, the last two lines of which are
written on the left-hand margin perpendicular to the main part. After a *khuṭba*
of almost seven lines, in which the author thanks God for providing mankind
with insight, the note summarizes the contents of the following booklet (*kur-
rāsa*), referring explicitly to the questions it includes on Ḥanafī *fiqh*, Quranic
exegesis, and prophetic traditions. Moreover, it points to the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of
an unnamed "lord of the rulers" (*sayyid al-mulūk*) who belongs to the "Turkic
rulers" (*mulūk al-Atrāk*). The text then enumerates the virtues and achieve-
ments of this unnamed ruler in rhymed prose:

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    trans.), *Dîvân* 71. I follow both editions and Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 11ʳ against Anonym-
    ous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), fol. 1ᵛ, in reading *mihrinden* instead of *mihrinde*.
195   For these two lines, see also Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 155.
196   Lit. "affection."
197   Here I partially follow the translation Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 120–1.
198   I thank Korkut Bugday (Düsseldorf) for his advice on the translation of this poem.

The banners of his reign (*dawlatuhu*)[199] are always raised, the heads of his enemies are lowered and humbled, his armies are supported [by God] and victorious, his salons (*majālisuhu*) are filled with various kinds of acts pleasing God (*qurbāt*), the *sharīʿa* rulings are in force, […] the doctrines (*madhāhib*) of the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) are manifest (*ẓāhira*), and the teachings of the people of falsehood (*ahl al-bāṭil*) are lost (*khāsira*).[200]

The note continues with a long list of blessings on the ruler. While the beginning of the note is rather readable, it becomes increasingly difficult to decipher toward the end, with the last four lines of the main text block and the two lines in the margin almost completely unpointed and barely legible at all. Nevertheless, the name of the author of the note, which appears twice in these lines, can be deciphered as ʿAbd al-Barr [Ibn] al-Shiḥna al-Ḥanafī, who in this note recorded his reading (*wuqūf ʿalā*) of the following text with its "splendid questions and valuable answers" and expressed his request for God's blessings on its patron.[201] On the second page atop the *basmala* preceding the *khuṭba* there is a *waqf* seal impression of Aḥmed III, as described above for the manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (see fig. 3.3).

Summing up the codicological evidence, we can conclude that the manuscript was produced in Rabīʿ II 919/ June 1513 as part of what was originally conceived as a multivolume work.[202] Although the manuscript of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is not as elaborately decorated as the manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we can still assume that it was written for an elite readership, given the high quality of its paper and its binding, the use of gold ink, and its extremely regular and neat layout. It seems plausible that Ahmet III 1377 was the copy of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* presented to Sultan al-Ghawrī, which thereafter became part of the latter's library.[203] It speaks in favor of this interpreta-

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199   On the meaning of *dawla* in Mamluk contexts, see van Steenbergen, Appearances 54–66; Yosef, Ethnic Origin 388–9.

200   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 1.

201   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 1.

202   It is unclear whether or not any other volumes of the work were ever written.

203   Awad, Sultan 322, assumes that Ahmet III 1377 is the author's copy of the text. So far, there is no clear-cut evidence that would allow us to accept or reject this claim. However, the manuscript includes mistakes, such as dittography (e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 156: *ʿalayhi* written twice; 204 *al-ḥaqq* written twice), unpointed letters (e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 242, 244), and missing words (e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 241: missing *sāʿa* added above the line; 255: missing *minhu* added above the; line 269: *al-jawāb* missing) that are typical errors of professional scribes, suggesting that the manuscript was copied by a person of this background. On scribal errors in general, see Gacek, *Vademecum* 234–5.

tion that already at the time of production of the manuscript or immediately afterward, the note discussed above consisting of three lines of Arabic and an Ottoman Turkish poem was added on the verso of the first flyleaf. This note points to al-Ghawrī as the intended recipient of the manuscript, as it speaks of seeking intercession "through the words of the *qibla* of the rulers and the model of the sultans, the sultan of Islam and the Muslims,"[204] thereby taking up parts of the terminology used for al-Ghawrī in the introduction of the work proper, where the ruler is also referred to as "the sultan of Islam."[205] Granted, this epithet could also refer to many other sultans in Islamicate history, yet of the following six lines of Ottoman Turkish poetry, at least four are also found in poems attributed to al-Ghawrī.[206] This indicates that the phrase "words of the […] sultan of Islam" is to be taken literally here: The author of the note quoted verses considered to have been penned by Sultan al-Ghawrī. This suggests that the manuscript was produced for readers, including al-Ghawrī himself, who would recognize the sultan's poetry and appreciate this quotation.

While we do not know for certain whether or not the manuscript ever received the sultan's personal attention, the long reading note on its first pages proves that it was read by at least one of al-Ghawrī's personal aides, the Ḥanafī chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna. Since Ibn al-Shiḥna is known to have died in 921/1515, he must have read the manuscript within two years after its production. More important than the precise date, however, is the fact that his reading note establishes that one of al-Ghawrī's personal intimates accessed and studied the manuscript during the sultan's reign.[207]

The subsequent history of the manuscript cannot be established with certainty until the beginning of the twelfth/eighteenth century, when it became part of Aḥmed III's endowed library at the Topkapı Palace, where it has remained, as more recent secondary entries attest. As in the case of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, it seems plausible that it found its way into this collection as part of the Ottoman war booty after the conquest of the Mamluk realms.

ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām edited parts of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in his 1941 publication *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī: Ṣafaḥāt min tārīkh Miṣr min al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī* together with his selections from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. As with the latter work, most scholars interested in al-Ghawrī's salons assumed

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204   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), fol. 1ʳ.

205   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3. For the title "Sultan of Islam and the Muslims" in Mamluk protocol, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 53.

206   Cf. Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 90, 155; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 71. On poetry collections attributed to al-Ghawrī, see sections 3.2.7 and 3.3.1 below.

207   On ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, see section 4.1.2.2 below.

that ʿAzzām's text could be relied upon as a complete basis for further works. However, ʿAzzām's version of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is even more problematic than that of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, given the extent to which ʿAzzām cut out material from the original work. While the part of the manuscript available to the present author features 644 discernible textual subunits—the majority of which are sets of questions and answers, making up 607 subunits—the corresponding section of ʿAzzām's edition includes only 99 of these units. Even when we account for the fact that ʿAzzām's text includes comparatively long subunits and that the coverage of his edition seems to be more complete toward the end of the text for which the corresponding part of the original manuscript is missing, ʿAzzām's edition leaves out at least three-quarters of the original text of the manuscript. To this, we must add the other problems from which ʿAzzām's work suffers, including the editor's very limited annotations and his undocumented "corrections" of the text.[208]

3.1.2.2   Structure and Contents

The preserved text of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* consists of a short introductory passage and the main part of the text. The lack of a proper concluding passage can be explained by the fact that only the first part of what was conceived of as at least a two-volume work is available to us.

The text begins with a comparatively long *khuṭba* of one and a half manuscript pages praising God, who is addressed as "enlightening with Your light the hearts of rulers and sultans."[209] The following passages of the *khuṭba* beseech God for His pardon and His help against the infidels. The last lines of the *khuṭba* are dedicated to the praise of the Prophet Muḥammad, who is referred to as "sultan of the prophets and messengers" (*sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn*)[210]— an epithet which calls to mind a similar formula that appears in the *khuṭba* of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.

The introduction proper begins with a statement by the first-person narrator, who states that he was honored to stand for "a period of ten years in

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208   The situation regarding later "editions" of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is identical to that of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* discussed above. As with the latter work, an annotated facsimile edition of the unicum of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* would be the best way to make the complete text available to the broader scholarly public, provided the necessary permission could be obtained from the Directorate of the Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi. As in the case of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the present study quotes the page numbers of both the manuscript (preceded by "(MS)") and, whenever possible, the partial edition (preceded by "(ed. ʿAzzām)").

209   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1.

210   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.

the service (*khidma*) of the sultan [...] Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī."[211] A
supplication for the sultan's well-being and the continuation of his reign fol-
lows. The first-person narrator of the text then explains that he had intended
to gather the "pearls" (*durar*)[212] of the sultan's *majlis*. Al-Ghawrī is referred
to as "sultan of the scholars who act [according to their knowledge]" (*sulṭān
al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿāmilīn*) and as "sultan of the insightful" (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*)[213]—
epithets already known to us from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. However, the
first-person narrator states that he only collected a "small portion" (*shay* [*sic*]
yasīr), while much escaped him:[214]

> I collected from the oceans of his [that is, the sultan's] useful lessons
> (*biḥār fawāyidihi* [*sic*]) a drop, and from the suns of his merits an atom. I
> could collect only one of 1,000, nay, one of 100,000, because I have been
> needy, shattered, and humbled (*maksūr al-khāṭir*) from first to last. To this,
> one has to add physical weakness, the large number of the envious, and
> the insufficiency of my belongings. I thus made—to the degree that I was
> able and in accordance with my indigence and neediness—a collection
> of problems in the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the word of God, mysterious puzzles
> (*muʿḍilāt asrār*) in the *ḥadīth*s of the Messenger of God, riddles on legal
> questions (*alghāz al-masāyil* [*sic*] *al-fiqhiyya*), and secrets of the Arabic
> sciences. I collected 2,000 of [these] difficult questions and called [the
> collection] *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāyil* [*sic*] *al-Ghawrī*.[215]

The introduction ends with a passage in which the author apologizes for the
mistakes in his work.[216]

Much of the introduction follows the conventions of Arabic works from
the middle period, including the reference to the high value of its contents,
the author's remarks about his indigence and limited abilities, his prayers
and praise for his patron, his reference to the envious, and his apologies for
his shortcomings.[217] Though it is a largely conventional introduction, it still

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211   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
212   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
213   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.
214   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.
215   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 5–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3–4. The reading of the title
       without internal rhyme is confirmed by a *fatḥa* above the *ghayn* of the last word.
216   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4.
217   On the conventionality of the introductions of most Arabic prose works, cf. Freimark,
       Vorwort, esp. i, 45–6, 53, 56–8; 91, 127, 162. According to Freimark's categorization, the intro-
       duction of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is a "dedicational introduction," cf. Freimark, *Vorwort* 89.

includes numerous valuable pieces of information. We learn that its author had been al-Ghawrī's client for ten years and that he based his work on what he had seen and heard in the sultan's *majālis*. Taking the date given in the colophon as a starting point, this suggests that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* had been in the sultan's service since at least Rabīʿ II 909/September–October 1503. If we assume that his work contains material from all ten years, then it should also cover, at least partially, the salons described in the earlier work, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. As we see below, this is indeed the case.

Furthermore, we learn from the introduction that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* provided his readers with only a selection of what he witnessed.[218] The questions he decided to include come mainly from the fields of Quranic exegesis,[219] *ḥadīth* studies, jurisprudence, and the "Arabic sciences"—a term which, according to the contents of the main part of the work, seems to refer rather narrowly to Arabic linguistics.

Turning now to the main part of the work, even a superficial reading of the text reveals that it does not have a sophisticated structure comparable to that of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Rather, the work consists of about 700 small independent textual units—usually pairs of questions and answers, although the text also includes two dozen prose narratives that are preceded by words such as *durra* (lit., pearl) or *jawhara* (lit., jewel), as well as seven riddles and one *fatwā*.[220] At times, the material appears to be arranged thematically with several textual units dealing with similar topics following each other, while in other instances, it is not apparent what kind of connection, if any, exists between directly adjacent units.[221]

As for the contents of the work, the fields of knowledge identified in the author's introduction clearly predominate. Thus, in general, the contents of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* are very similar to those of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, although *al-Kawkab al-durrī* deals only rarely with the kind of Persian lore that is so characteristic for the *khātima* and *munāsib* passages of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* added by its author.

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218   On the ability to make such selections as an important qualification of an Arabic litterat-eur, see Fähndrich, Begriff 334; Kilpatrick, Selection, *passim*; Günther, Learned 139, 141–5, 148, 150, 153.

219   Brockelmann and Yavuz considered the text a *tafsīr* work, cf. Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 13; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 50.

220   For the riddle, see Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 55–6, 211; and for the *fatwā* (MS) 197–201; (ed. ʿAzzām) 64–8. On the latter, see also section 5.2.1 below.

221   See also Awad, Sultan 322; Irwin, Thinking 38.

3.1.2.3 Authorship, Context of Origin, and Intended Readership

The only known manuscript of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not contain any direct information on its author, which might have been included in the epilogue of the work. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of the work yields several insights on the background and origin of the text. In terms of its language, with the exception of a single word, the work is entirely in Arabic and lacks the multilingual character of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Moreover, the Arabic of its author does not exhibit any peculiarities that would suggest that he was not a native speaker of this language. Furthermore, he praises in particular those participants in the *majālis* who are Ḥanafīs[222] and in general shows such a pronounced preference for the Ḥanafī school of law that we can assume that he belonged to this *madhhab*.[223] This observation is of considerable importance for understanding the intention for his composition of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. Like *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* originates from a context in which patronage relations play an important role. Yet, while it is pretty clear that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was written mainly in an effort to secure the ongoing benevolence of Sultan al-Ghawrī, in the case of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* the situation is more complicated.

Comparing which participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* figure prominently in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is particularly helpful in assessing the motives for the composition of the former work. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, two people clearly occupy center stage throughout the text: the first-person narrator identified as al-Sharīf and Sultan al-Ghawrī. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* recounts many of the exchanges during the salons basically as dialogues between these two men.[224] Such a rhetorical highlighting of the relation between the dedicatee of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and its author is hardly surprising given its background.

In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the sultan is still the main protagonist of the work, yet its first-person narrator is much less visible than his counterpart in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[225] Moreover, a third person takes up almost as much nar-

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222   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 19; (ed. ʿAzzām) 14.

223   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 10–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 9–10, where the first-person narrator poses questions about a specifically Ḥanafī ruling; (MS) 46–7, where the first-person narrator quotes a Ḥanafī *fiqh* work; (ed. ʿAzzām) 91–5, where the first-person narrator asks questions about an explicitly Ḥanafī interpretation of a *ḥadīth*.

224   Al-Ghawrī is clearly the most important person in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, with almost 300 questions and answers attributed to him. The first-person narrator poses questions and gives replies in only slightly more than 100 instances.

225   *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* shows al-Ghawrī asking or answering questions in slightly more than 400 instances. Given that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is longer than *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,

rative space as the first-person narrator; this figure is the Ḥanafī chief judge
ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, who is usually referred to as *shaykh al-Islām*.[226]
While fewer than ten questions in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* are attributed to Ibn al-
Shiḥna, he is presented as solving numerous questions posed by the sultan and
other participants.[227] As is to be expected, the chief judge is presented as par-
ticularly knowledgeable on matters of *fiqh*,[228] but he is also able to answer
questions that deal with Quranic exegesis,[229] the biography of the Prophet
Muḥammad,[230] and details of Sunni creedal teachings.[231] As a result, Ibn al-
Shiḥna appears in the work as the most important scholarly authority in the
sultan's *majālis*.

Futhermore, unlike many other participants who appear in the work with-
out any introduction, Ibn al-Shiḥna receives a thorough introduction as "the
shaykh al-Islām, the refuge of humankind, the supreme authority (*raʾīs*) who
hails from supreme authorities up to Adam the pure, the highest Ḥanafī
judge—may God kindly repay him [his] hidden [good deeds]."[232] Moreover, a
lengthy section of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* discusses the merits of Ibn al-Shiḥna's
grandfather[233] Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna during Tīmūr Lang's
(r. 771–805/1370–1405) invasion of Syria.[234] By referring to this Abū l-Walīd
Muḥammad explicitly as "the grandfather of the chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna,"[235]
the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* makes the connection to his grandson ʿAbd
al-Barr particularly clear.

Taken together, there is ample evidence that the author of *al-Kawkab al-
durrī* did his best to present ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna in a favorable light.
To this end, he highlighted the chief judge's scholarly competence, included

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the sultan's share in the discussions is roughly the same in the two works. Fewer than fifty
questions and answers are attributed to the first-person narrator of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

226   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 19; (ed. ʿAzzām) 14, explicitly refers to the Ḥanafī
chief judge as *shaykh al-Islām*. ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's position as Ḥanafī chief judge
during the years covered by *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is corroborated by historiographical
sources and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 205; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68. On him as *shaykh
al-Islām*, see also Burak, *Formation* 202.

227   More than 40 questions and answers are attributed to him.

228   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 11–2, 38, 53–4, 176, 212, 230–2; (ed. ʿAzzām)
10–2.

229   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 59, 99, 118–21, 281; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30.

230   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 108; (ed. ʿAzzām).

231   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 175, 213; (ed. ʿAzzām) 51–2.

232   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 19; (ed. ʿAzzām) 14.

233   On ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's family background, see section 4.1.2.2 below.

234   See section 4.2.7 below.

235   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 205; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68.

ample material on one of his famous ancestors, and praised him in lavish terms. Yet, while ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna is the most obvious example of the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* flattering contemporaries apart from the sultan, Ibn al-Shiḥna is far from the only one. Two further examples include Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf (d. 921/1516), who was *shaykh* at al-Ghawrī's funeral complex[236] and is introduced by the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* as "the greatest *imām*, the exemplar for mankind throughout the world."[237] Second, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭawīl al-Qādirī (d. 936/1530), who served as Shāfiʿī chief judge under al-Ghawrī,[238] is called "the chief judge of the world, [...] the exemplar for the leading masters, the *qibla* of the scholars throughout the world, the *shaykh*, the perfection (*kamāl*) of the religious community, of the religious law, of the truth, of piety, of legal opinions, and of religion."[239]

In light of the evidence adduced thus far in this section, we can conclude that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* wrote his work first and foremost as a client of Sultan al-Ghawrī, who is mentioned in the title of the work, who appears in its main part as the most important participant, and who is praised and blessed in the introduction. In order to strengthen his long-term patronage relationship with the ruler, the author demonstrated his ability to provide a scholarly, literary, and entertaining work. Moreover, given that he repeatedly emphasizes his destitute condition, it stands to reason that he hoped for a material reward for his literary efforts. However, the details of the interaction between the author and the sultan are somewhat more obscure than in the case of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, and we cannot say whether the author's aspirations were fulfilled.

Consolidating his relationship with the sultan was clearly not the author's only motivation in composing his work. In addition to his interest in documenting the proceedings of the sultan's *majālis* in which he had participated, he also used his work to flatter leading figures of the late Mamluk scholarly and judiciary elite in general and the Ḥanafī chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna in particular. The author, who belonged to the same *madhhab* as Ibn al-Shiḥna, might have hoped that the latter could support him in strengthening his patronage relationship with the ruler. This would put Ibn al-Shiḥna in the position of a patronage broker who was approached by a lower-ranking person from his *madhhab* in order to mediate the latter's relationship with the sultan. Moreover, our author might have aimed to establish a patronage relationship with Ibn al-Shiḥna himself, who could, inter alia, reward him with minor judiciary positions or another

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236   Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 272.
237   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 122; (ed. ʿAzzām) 25.
238   Cf. al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* ii, 45–6.
239   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 126; (ed. ʿAzzām) 39.

source of income in the Ḥanafī school. As for the other members of the civilian
elite who are praised in the text, the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* might have
sought their support and assistance, too. However, it is clear that Ibn al-Shiḥna
was—apart from the sultan—the main intended recipient of the work.

Thanks to the codicological evidence, we know that the author of *al-Kawkab
al-durrī* was at least partly successful in attracting Ibn al-Shiḥna's attention. As
the long reading note on the first page of MS Ahmet III 1377 proves, Ibn al-
Shiḥna read the text and was impressed by it. The fact that the copy of the
text most probably intended for al-Ghawrī's library carries this reading note
in such a prominent place might suggest that the Ḥanafī chief judge recom-
mended the work to the ruler in this paratext that seems to fulfill the function
of a *taqrīẓ*, or blurb. As Thomas Bauer showed, paratexts of this kind, which
typically included praise of a new work and its author, were an important and
widespread feature of Mamluk literary communication.[240]

Despite his success in gaining Ibn al-Shiḥna's attention, the author of *al-
Kawkab al-durrī* might have chosen the wrong patronage broker. In Shawwāl
919/December 1513—that is, only a few months after the completion of the
first part of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*—Ibn al-Shiḥna fell from the sultan's grace and
was ousted from his office as chief judge after opposing the sultan's verdict
in an adultery case.[241] Unlike other former chief judges, Ibn al-Shiḥna never
regained his position. Fallen from grace, the former chief judge was most prob-
ably unable to support the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* as the latter had hoped.

In addition to these patronage centered reflections, we should not forget that
al-Kawkab al-durrī was also well-suited to transmit a broad variety of scholarly
insights and interesting literary material to its readers. It could be used as a
source of information on Sultan al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and as a mine, filled with
nuggets of learning, especially relevant to those who might one day find them-
selves in a social situation resembling that of the sultan's *majālis*.

An interesting possibility arises from the insight that both *Nafāʾis majālis al-
sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were written mainly to secure the sultan's
benevolence and ongoing patronage: Could the two works have been writ-
ten by the same author? Indeed, several observations point in this direction:
Both al-Sharīf, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, and the author of *al-
Kawkab al-durrī* were knowledgeable in Ḥanafī *fiqh* and probably belonged to
this *madhhab*. Moreover, there is a certain degree of verbatim overlap between
the introductory passages of the two works, especially in the epithets for al-

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240   Bauer, Communication 44–5. See also Levanoni, Supplementary Source, esp. 148.
241   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 343–6. See section 4.1.2.2 below.

Ghawrī—such as, for example, *sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ* and *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*—and the Prophet Muḥammad, who in both works is called *sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ*. Furthermore, both authors noted that they had been close to al-Ghawrī from early in his reign onward. What is more, the works share a common basic structure consisting mainly of pairs of questions and answers. Finally, there is a considerable overlap in the contents of the discussions that the two works recount, both regarding the broader topics of the conversations and the specific questions.

However, we should not overestimate the cogency of these observations. As for the fact that both authors were most probably Ḥanafīs, we know that many participants of the *majālis*, including al-Ghawrī, belonged to this *madhhab*, which predominated among the Mamluk ruling elite.[242] Hence, it is not surprising that two of the sultan's scholarly clients adhered to the teachings of this school.

Regarding the terminological similarities between the two works, similarities that are obvious in expressions such as *sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ*, *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*, and *sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ*, we should take three observations into account: First, we are dealing mostly with similar, but not identical formulations. Al-Sharīf calls al-Ghawrī "*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*," while the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* refers to him as "*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿāmilīn*." Similarly, Muḥammad features in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as *sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ*, while he is called *sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn* in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. While the resemblance of these formulations is undeniable, the significance of this observation is limited, since all three expressions also appear in other works from the middle period onward.[243] Finally, it stands to reason that epithets referring to a ruler or a person with great religious significance follow certain conventions and can thus appear in similar form in two independent works that share the same social and cultural background. In support of this last point, we might note that *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn* also appears in an Ottomanized form as *ʿāriflerün sulṭānı* in an Ottoman Turkish poem composed for al-Ghawrī by two of his Turkic-speaking intimates.[244] Since there is nothing to suggest that these two poets were involved in the composition of either *al-Kawkab al-durrī* or *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,

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242   Mauder, *Krieger* 116. On the sultan's *madhhab*, see Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193ʳ, 240ᵛ, 314ʳ.

243   For *sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ* and *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*, see, e.g., Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 153; Hernandez, *Thought* 45; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 116–7; Hassan, *Longing* 67, 84. For *sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ*, see, e.g., al-Burūsawī, *Tafsīr* viii, 34; al-Nursī, *Ishārāt* 60; and for Persian equivalents, see Auer, *Symbols* 47–8, 56.

244   The poem is edited and translated in Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 27–8. See section 4.1.2.4 below.

the appearance of the phrase *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn* in its Ottoman Turkish form in their poem suggests that the epithet must have had some currency among al-Ghawrī's contemporaries.

Furthermore, according to the two works, there is a considerable gap between the points when the two authors became associated with al-Ghawrī. Whereas al-Sharīf indicated that he had become part of the sultan's court in Ramaḍān 910/February 1505, in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* the author's statement points to a date in Rabīʿ II 909/September–October 1503 for the beginning of his affiliation with the sultan. The discrepancy of about one and a half years between these two dates is difficult to explain if the two authors were the same person.

The question-and-answer pattern so typical for the two works is also not unique to them. As Hans Daiber noted, "the pattern of question […] and answer […] has strongly influenced, both in form and content, numerous Arabic writings in virtually all fields of knowledge."[245] The technique, which is well-suited for didactical purposes, is widely used in texts dealing, inter alia, with Quranic exegesis, apologetics and polemics, theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine and natural sciences, as well as mysticism.[246] It is no surprise to find it in the works under discussion here as well, especially since a series of questions and answers is a typical feature of Islamicate *majālis* sessions.

Yet, the arguments advanced for the identity of the two authors are not only inconclusive, there are also several points that speak directly against the assumption that they were the same person. One of the most important arguments being that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is obviously the work of a person who learned Arabic as a foreign language, while there is nothing to suggest that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* was not a native Arabic speaker. Moreover, while al-Sharīf proudly demonstrates his knowledge of other languages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the main text of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is completely in Arabic, with the exception of one word.

Furthermore, the codicological evidence does not point to any direct connection between the two works. The manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was, from the beginning, intended for the sultan's library, as the valuable materials used in its production also underline. By contrast, the manuscript of *al-*

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245 Daiber, Masāʾil wa-Adjwiba 636.

246 Daiber, Masāʾil wa-Adjwiba 636–8. The most substantial study of Arabic dialogical texts is Forster, *Wissensvermittlung*. See also Ullah, *Exegesis* 77–9; Lane, *Commentary* 140–1; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 170–1, Young, *Forge* 1–26; Antes, *Prophetenwunder* 17; Makdisi, Method; and on the didactic significance of this technique, see Günther, Fictional Narration 459; Günther, Principles 74; Günther, Educational Achievements 74.

Kawkab al-durrī exhibits no direct signs of having been written for the ruler's collection, although one must acknowledge that the costs involved in its manufacture must have been considerable, too.

As for the contents of the two works, there are differences that speak against the assumption of a common author, such as the fact that Iranian lore and Persian history are largely absent from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, but figure prominently in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Furthermore, if both works were written by the same author, we would expect that *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the younger of the two texts, would include cross-references to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. However, there is not a single mention of the older work, explicitly or implicitly. What is more, the structure of the two works is completely different. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* features clear internal divisions based on chronological criteria. By contrast, the internal order of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is, in many instances, hardly discernible.

In addition, the respective roles of some of the most important dramatis personae are notably dissimilar in the two works. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the first-person narrator is one of the two people who clearly dominate the account. He is presented as proudly showing off his competence and gaining the advantage in his debates with other *majālis* participants. The first-person narrator of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is far less prominent and indeed largely overshadowed by other figures, most notably the *shaykh al-Islām* Ibn al-Shiḥna and other leading scholars of his time. Instead of primarily demonstrating the author's competence and ability at the expense of other people, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is much more concerned with casting a positive light on other participants.

The most conclusive evidence against al-Sharīf being the author of both works comes from those passages in which discussions of the same question appear in both works. As these passages are of particular importance for assessing the value of the texts as historical sources, they are analyzed in detail below.[247] At the present stage, two observations deserve special attention: First, the phrasing of the accounts of the pertinent debates is so different that, with the exception of technical terms and quotations from older sources, there are hardly any passages in the texts that are identical. This observation even applies to the basic grammatical structure of the questions. If both works were penned by the same author, one would expect a much greater degree of correspondence or indeed a word-for-word agreement between the two texts.

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247   See section 3.1.5 below.

Second, both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* clearly identify the questions asked and the answers given by their respective first-person narrators, who are to be seen as literary representations of their authors. In several cases, questions or answers attributed to the first-person narrator in work A appear also in work B and vice-versa. However, there is not a single instance of a statement attributed to the first-person narrator of work A also presented as a statement of the first-person narrator of work B. In the case of the four questions or answers that are introduced by "I said" (or similar formulas) in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that appear also in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the speaker remains unidentified in the latter work.[248] By the same token, in two instances in which statements by the first-person narrator of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* are included also in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the speaker is not named in the second work.[249] Therefore, there is nothing in the texts that would indicate that their first-person narrators are literary representations of the same author.

Yet, there is more: In one particularly intriguing passage in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, its first-person narrator replies to a legal question posed by al-Ghawrī. The sultan's question and the reply are also included in a largely corresponding form in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. However, in this case the sultan's interlocutor is identified by name in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as a certain Shaykh ʿAbbās. Thanks to this passage, we can potentially identify the first-person narrator—and thus also the author—of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* with a specific historic person. Before discussing the consequences of this observation, however, we need to take a detailed look at the respective passage.

As in other cases in which the contents of the two works overlap, the wording of the sultan's question is notably different in the two accounts. Thanks to its very specific contents, however, there can be no doubt that the substance of the question is identical in the two works. The version in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* reads:

> **Question:** Our lord the sultan asked Shaykh ʿAbbās [...]: "What do you say about the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) of the naked? Is prostration (*sujūd*) and bowing after standing upright (*rukūʿ*) incumbent in this case or are

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248 (1) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 10; (ed. ʿAzzām) 9; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 20; (2) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 74–5; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 90; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30; (3) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 90–1; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS), 222; (4) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 157–7; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 115–6.

249 (1) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 92–3; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 29–30; (2) al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 117; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 35; (ed. ʿAzzām) 15.

gestures (*īmā'*) [with the hands while sitting instead of performing the aforementioned actions] sufficient?"[250]

Al-Kawkab al-durrī gives the following parallel version:

> **Question:** His Excellency the sultan said: "When there is a group of naked people, do they [have to] perform the ritual prayer (*yuṣallūn*) in a standing position [that is, as prescribed, including *sujūd* and *rukūʿ*] or [may] they remain seated [that is, performing the prayer with gestures only]?"[251]

So far, the textual situation is fairly typical: While the wording of the question is clearly distinct, the two sources agree with regard to the basic content of the question and the person posing it.

According to the account in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, Shaykh ʿAbbās replied in a very concise way: "It is obligatory that the person in question performs *sujūd* and *rukūʿ* and not [only] gestures [while remaining seated]."[252] In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the first-person narrator to whom this question is addressed here gives a more elaborate reply, naming the legal authorities on which his assessment is based. Still, the gist of his reply is the same as in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*:

> **Answer:** I said: "[...] Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik—may God have mercy on them both—said that they [have] to perform the prayer in a standing position [that is, including *sujūd* and *rukūʿ*] because standing up is one of the basic elements of the ritual prayer, as is *rukūʿ*."[253]

In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the account of the debate on this question ends with the first-person narrator's reply. Yet, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf included the information that al-Ghawrī did not agree with the point of view that a naked person had to perform *rukūʿ* and *sujūd*; instead he argued that people who pray naked must remain seated to reveal less of their nudity.[254]

We need not be distracted here with why and on what scholarly basis the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* discussed such legal details, or whether the results of their discussions were in accordance with the teachings found in the

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250 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61.
251 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 47.
252 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61.
253 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 47.
254 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 62.

scholarly literature of their time.[255] Rather, what is relevant are the differences between the accounts of the same conversation in these two sources. How can we explain that the reply of the first-person narrator of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* takes the form of a scholarly statement, while the corresponding reply by Shaykh ʿAbbās is not only extremely short, but is also presented as controversial in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*?

It seems understandable that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, who composed his text, inter alia, as a documentation of his cultural capital and his erudition, would strive to present himself in a favorable light. To this end, he might have enhanced his originally rather short reply to reflect more positively on his scholarly competence. Moreover, he might have opined that including the sultan's criticism of his legal opinion would be against his vested interests.

Al-Sharīf, when composing *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, had no reason to give his account of the discussion a positive spin in favor of Shaykh ʿAbbās. Rather, al-Sharīf used his work to cast shadows on the merits of some of the participants in the sultan's salons whom he perceived as adversaries or at least competitors. Thus, he might have been inclined to downplay the scholarly quality of the replies given to the sultan's questions by other participants, and to highlight instead the criticism levied by al-Ghawrī against their points of view.

Unless we can locate additional information on the debate in another source, it is almost impossible to decide whether *al-Kawkab al-durrī* or *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* provides a more balanced account of the conversation, as the author of each work had reason to shape his account to suit his personal interests. However, the similarities and differences between the two accounts tell us something about the value of these texts as historical sources—a point we revisit in more detail below.[256] Furthermore, our discussion demonstrates that in light of the available evidence, it is next to impossible for the two first-person narrators—and thus the authors—of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* to be one and the same person.[257]

Then who was the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*? Should we attribute the work to the figure referred to in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as Shaykh ʿAbbās? Unfortunately, the amount of available information on this man is extremely

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255   See section 4.2.1 on *fiqh* discussions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. On nudity during prayer, see Katz, *Prayer* 23–4.

256   See section 3.1.5 below.

257   In three instances *al-Kawkab al-durrī* refers to a *majālis* participant by the name of al-Sharīf Nūr Allāh. While it is tempting to identify him with our author al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, there is no further evidence supporting this assumption.

limited, as no relevant historiographial or biographical work provides information on anyone by this name who lived during al-Ghawrī's reign.[258] Moreover, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* only mentions Shaykh ʿAbbās in the account of the tenth *majlis* of Rabīʿ II 911/September 1505. He came to this meeting together with two young *mamlūk*s, one of whom had memorized an introductory work of Ḥanafī *fiqh*, while the other knew the Quran by heart. The way Shaykh ʿAbbās is presented together with these two slave soldiers suggests that he was involved in their education.[259] If so, Shaykh ʿAbbās probably belonged to the group of local scholars who were responsible for the non-military education of *mamlūk* recruits and on whom Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442)[260] writes:

> Every group [of *mamlūk* trainees] had an expert of religious law (*faqīh*) who attended to them every day. Their education began with the book of God Most High, the skill of writing, and exercise in the conduct prescribed by religious law. [...] When one of [the young *mamlūk*s] grew to the age of adolescence, the expert of religious law taught him about the science of law and read an introductory work (*muqaddima*) about it with him.[261]

It seems plausible that Shaykh ʿAbbās was one of the *faqīh*s who trained *mamlūk* recruits. In this capacity, he had access to the Cairo Citadel—a fact that explains why he could participate in the sultan's *majālis*. Moreover, our observation that the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* was most probably a Ḥanafī fits well with the hypothesis that Shaykh ʿAbbās was an instructor for *mamlūk* recruits, as almost all *mamlūk*s belonged to this school of law.[262]

Still, all the evidence we have for Shaykh ʿAbbās' authorship of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is merely circumstantial and mostly does not come from the work itself. If this situation does not change—for example by locating another volume of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* that provides information on its author—it seems prudent to consider the author of the work unknown, at least for the time being.

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258 MS Leiden, Leiden University Library, Or. 11.031, which includes a grammatical commentary suitable for children, was copied in Rajab 887/August 1482 on behalf of a certain "Shaykh ʿAbbās al-Azharī," cf. Witkam, *Inventory* xii, 22.

259 Cf. al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 164; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61.

260 For his biography, see, e.g., Mauder, *Krieger* 50–7.

261 Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii, 692. On this passage and its context, see Mauder, *Krieger* 80–4; Mauder, Development 966–8; Haarmann, Arabic 86–7; Haarmann, Der arabische Osten 224–5.

262 Mauder, *Krieger* 116.

A final aspect of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to consider are the sources of the work. The situation here is very similar to that discussed above for *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*: According to the author, he did not cite earlier works directly, but only when these were quoted or referred to by participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. This situation greatly complicates the task of identifying the specific texts quoted in the work. Nevertheless, a considerable number of sources could be identified and are listed as preliminary findings in appendix 1. As in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, almost all of the works quoted in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were widely used and well-known texts that played an important role in the scholarly life of the Islamicate middle period. Apart from the Quran and the canonical Sunni *ḥadīth* collections, we find among them the Quran commentaries by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), al-Zamakhsharī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), and al-Bayḍāwī (d. ca 716/1316); Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar al-Taftāzānī's (d. 793/1390) theological commentary works *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* and *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*; and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) commentary *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*; as well as Ḥanafī legal textbooks and *fatwā* collections. As in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the way these sources are used is, in many cases, the most interesting element aspect of their being quoted.

3.1.3 al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya

3.1.3.1 The Manuscript

Today, our third main primary source is preserved in a two-volume manuscript in Istanbul. As both volumes of the manuscript are very similar in terms of their codicological characteristics, they are described together here.[263]

The volumes are part of the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi collection and bear the shelf marks Ayasofya 3312 and 3313. They are almost completely in Arabic, with only a few short interspersed Ottoman Turkish passages.[264] The title of the text appears in the introduction of the first volume as *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya* (The jeweled necklaces on al-Ghawrī's anecdotes)[265] and in a slightly different form[266] as *al-ʿUqūd al-*

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263   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 146–8 for a description of the work and its manuscript. The present discussion repeats some of the observations from this earlier publication.

264   For a transliteration, translation, and contextualization of one of the Turkic poems, see Eckmann, Literature 310–1; Eckmann, Literatur 299–300. On additional Turkic material in the text, see Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 51–2.

265   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ʳ.

266   On the phenomenon of Arabic authors giving different titles to one work, see Ambros,

jawhariyya fī l-maḥāsin al-dawla al-ashrafiyya al-Ghawriyya (The jeweled neck-laces on the attractions of the reign of al-Ashraf al-Ghawrī) in the introduction of the second volume.[267] In the catalogue of the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, the work is registered simply as *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*,[268] and we refer to it here with this short title, too.

It is clear from the title that al-Ghawrī was the dedicatee of the work; this is further confirmed by its contents, as we see shortly. According to its colophon, the first volume was completed in mid-Ṣafar 921/March–April 1515,[269] while that of the second bears the date mid-Rabīʿ I 921/April–May 1515.[270] Neither volume includes any explicit information as to its author's name.

The incipit of the first volumes reads:

الحمد لله الذي ارسل الينا شفيع المذنبين وارشد الى التوبة جميع العامين ...

and that of the second one:

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على خير خلقه محمد واله وصحبه اجمعين ...

The colophons of both volumes are in the same hand as the remainder of the main text and include the date of completion of the respective volume, together with conventional religious formulas. The colophon of the first volume, moreover, indicates the existence of a second volume. There is no reference to a third volume in the colophon of the second one.

The text is written on finished paper of creamy color and uniform size.[271] There are seventeen lines per page. Both volumes feature a rather modern look-ing pencil foliation in Ottoman-sytle numerals from the second folio onward. The first volume consists of 111 folios preceded by two flyleaves, while the

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Beobachtungen 15. On *ʿiqd* (sg. of *ʿuqūd*) as a typical element of Arabic book titles, see Ambros, Beobachtungen 22.

267   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 1ᵛ. On the title, see also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 146.

268   Anonymous, *Defter* 199.

269   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 111ʳ.

270   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 113ʳ. On the date of completion, see also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 146.

271   Since the directorate of the Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi did not grant me access to the manuscript itself and the available reproductions are without scale, it is impossible to provide information on the dimensions of the pages and the textblock. Very little information is available on the binding.

second volume features 113 folios and one preceding flyleaf. Catchwords are found in the lower left corner of every other page.[272]

The main text of the manuscript is written by a single scribe in a fairly regular and easily readable *naskh*. Headlines and a few other selected words, such as the name of the patron and the *basmala*, are larger than the main text and partly in *thuluth*. The text is fully pointed, vowel marks are rare and used almost exclusively in highlighted passages.[273]

The main body of the text is in black ink. Gold ink is used for the *basmala* and the name of the patron at the beginning of the first volume, and for the textual dividers at the beginning of the introduction of the first volume. All other textual dividers and highlighted words in both volumes are in red, as are the *basmala* and the name of the patron at the beginning of volume two. The textual dividers are in the shape of large round dots. The manuscript does not include illustrations or any other form of painted decorations.[274]

The first volume features secondary entries on the recto of the first and second flyleaves and on the recto of the first folio. In the upper right corner of the recto of the first flyleaf, a note in Arabic letters reads "the first volume (*jild*) of *Kitāb ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* Arabic 17." Below, the same person who added the foliation to the manuscript inscribed the shelf mark "Ayasofya 3312" with a pencil. What is clearly the most recent note is located in the lower right corner of the page and reads (in Latin letters) "Mikrofilm Arşiv No: 3991."

In the upper left corner of the recto of the second flyleaf, the person responsible for the foliation of the manuscript noted that it consists of 111 leaves. Moreover, the same hand also wrote the number "3312" in the upper right corner of the same page, again using a pencil for these two notes. By far the largest note on this page, however, is not a secondary entry, but was written by the same person as the main part of the text. It is identical (word-for-word) to the entry on the verso side of the first flyleaf of the manuscript of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* which includes verses attributed to al-Ghawrī. The only difference is that in the case of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, it is in black rather than red and gold ink.

The recto of the first folio includes several entries, all of which are located more or less in the middle of the page. Here they are described from top to bottom: The uppermost entry is in black ink and *nastaʿlīq* script. It reads *"Kitāb ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya."* Below, we find an Ottoman Turkish poem of four lines of unclear authorship dealing with the topic of mystical love for God and

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272   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 146–7.
273   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 147.
274   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 147.

written in the same hand as the main text. Further below is a black *waqf* seal impression with the *ṭughrāʾ* of the Ottoman Sultan Maḥmūd I (r. 1143–68/1730–54),[275] which is followed by the number "3312" in Ottoman numerals and an undated Arabic note of a triangular shape in *nastaʿlīq* script stating that the aforementioned Ottoman ruler had endowed the manuscript as a *waqf*.[276] The two entries at the bottom are an unreadable small seal impression and the same unreadable short cursive note also found in the two manuscripts described above.

The secondary entries of the second volume are all located on the recto of the first folio and are largely identical to those of the first volume. In the middle right at the top of the page, a note in Arabic letters reads "second volume of *ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*." Below, in the middle of the page, we find again the *waqf* seal impression of Sultan Maḥmūd I together with the triangular note described above. The only difference is the number next to the seal impression; in this case it is "3313." Below the note, there are two unreadable small seal impressions and the cursive note found on all manuscripts described so far in this chapter.

Based on the information collected so far, we can outline the history of the manuscript as follows: An unknown person produced the two volumes, one after another, in early 921/1515, most probably in Cairo or its surroundings. He not only wrote the main body of the text, but also added two notes at the beginning of the first manuscript; these notes consist largely of Ottoman Turkish verses. Although these two volumes are not as lavishly decorated as the manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, they were most probably produced for an elite readership who would appreciate the high quality of the paper, the use of gold ink, and their very neat and orderly layout. As in the case of the manuscript of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the direct reference to the patron of the work in its title and the quotation of poetry attributed to al-Ghawrī suggest that the volumes were intended for the eyes of members of the court in general and the sultan in particular.

At an unknown point in time, the manuscript was taken to Istanbul, most probably in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate. Unlike the two manuscripts discussed above, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* did not become part of Sultan Aḥmed III's library, but was incorporated into the endowed lib-

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275   For descriptions of identical seal impressions, see ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 12; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 235.

276   For identical notes, see ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 12; Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 16–7.

rary of Maḥmud I in the Ayasofya Mosque that opened in 1155/1742.[277] It most likely remained there up to the first half of the fourteenth/twentieth century, when many libraries in Istanbul, including the Ayasofya library, were dissolved and their books transferred to the Süleymaniye complex.[278]

For about 300 years, at least, the history of the manuscripts of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* went separate ways. From a codicological perspective, however, the two manuscripts share several noteworthy characteristics. Among other aspects, both are written on high-quality finished paper very similar in color. In both manuscripts, there are seventeen lines per page. Moreover, gold ink is used for the highlighting of particularly important words and passages at the beginning of both manuscripts, while other important textual elements are in red throughout the remainder of the volumes. Furthermore, both manuscripts include catchwords on every other page of the main textblock, but lack illustrations or illuminations. Finally, the same scripts—*naskh* and *thuluth*—appear in both manuscripts.

Granted, these observations apply to many other manuscripts as well. They become meaningful only when combined with two other points: First, both manuscripts include on their flyleaves identical notes in which a first-person narrator employs the very same verses attributed to Sultan al-Ghawrī to beseech God for His pardon. This can hardly be a coincidence, especially since the verses appear in a distinct order not found in any other source that we know of.

Second, a graphological examination proves that both manuscripts were written by the same person. The following three figures contain examples of identical groups of words found in both Ahmet III 1377 and Ayasofya 3312. Clearly, they are in the same hand.

Based on this evidence, we can conclude that the preserved manuscripts of both *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were copied by the same scribe. As is clear further below, this is not the only common feature of the two texts.

There is no printed edition of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and thus far, the work has received almost no scholarly attention, as discussed in detail above.[279]

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277   Erünsal, Libraries in the Ottoman Empire 475. On this library and its history, see also Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries* 53–5, 130, 133–4, 167, 196; Erünsal, Establishment 4, 6; Erünsal, Foundation Libraries 43; Necipoğlu, Organization 23; and on its architectural history, see Can and Altunbaş, Onarlımlar.

278   Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries* 91.

279   See section 2.2.2 above.
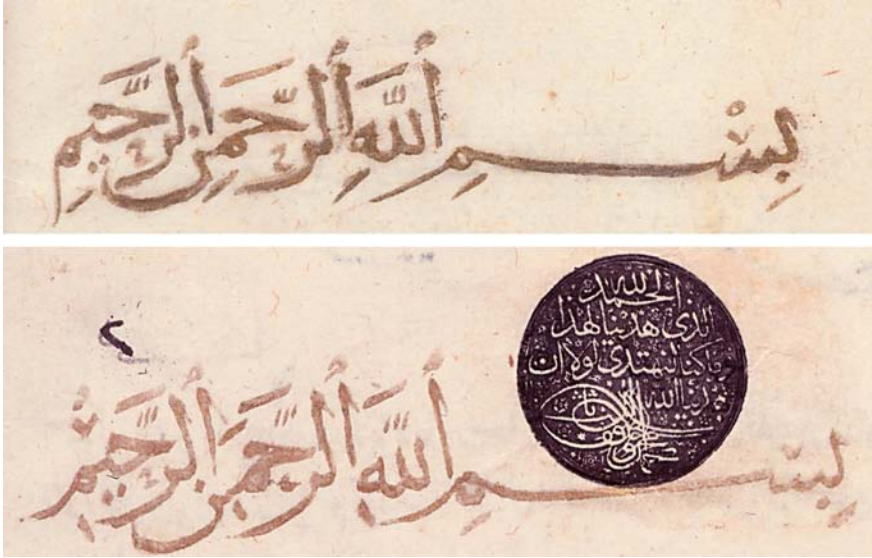
FIGURE 3.3 At the top: *Basmala* of Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3312, fol. 1ᵛ. Courtesy of Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı. At the bottom: *Basmala* of Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377, p. 2
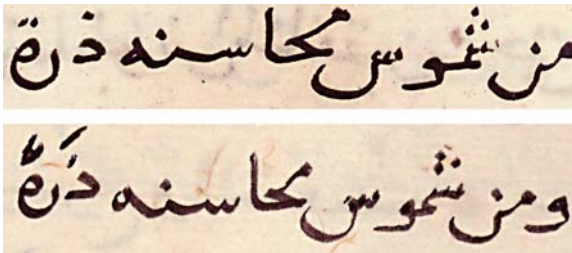
FIGURE 3.4 At the top: Word group *"min shumūs maḥāsinihi dharra"* of Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3312, fol. 3ʳ. Courtesy of Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı. At the bottom: Word group *"wa-min shumūs maḥāsinihi dharra"* of Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377, p. 5
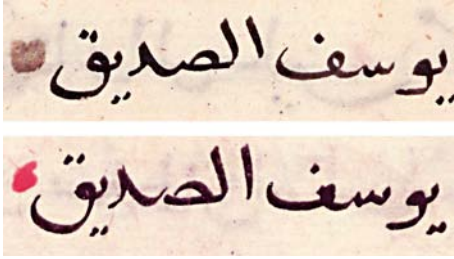
FIGURE 3.5 At the top: Word group *"Yūsuf al-ṣadīq"* of Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3312, fol. 2ᵛ. Courtesy of Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı. At the bottom: Word group *"Yūsuf al-ṣadīq"* of Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377, p. 3

3.1.3.2 Structure and Contents

The first volume of the text consists of an introduction, a short question-and-answer section, a long main part that deals with the history of humankind from the time of Adam up to the reign of the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–33), and a short final passage that includes the colophon of the first volume. The second volume begins with a comparatively short introduction including a question-and-answer section. Thereafter, the historical survey takes up where it had stopped in the first volume and continues to the early days of al-Ghawrī's reign.[280] A short final section with an integrated colophon completes the text.

The following table provides the reader with a schematized outline of and additional information on the contents of the two volumes.

The comparatively long and conventional *khuṭba* commences with the praise of God and pleas for His pardon.[281] Thereafter follows an almost equally long section on the Prophet Muḥammad, who is referred to as "sultan of the prophets and messengers" (*sulṭān al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn*).[282] At the beginning of the introduction proper, the first-person narrator states that he spent ten years in the service (*khidma*) of Sultan al-Ghawrī, who is introduced with his full titles, and during this time, the narrator profited from the sultan's useful lessons (*fawāyid*), which he decided to collect in his work:[283]

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280 In light of the mainly historical contents of the work, Eckmann misleadingly described it as a "universal history," Eckmann, Literature 310; Eckmann, Literatur 299.

281 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 1ᵛ.

282 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 2ʳ.

283 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 2ʳ–2ᵛ.

TABLE 3.2   Overview of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*[a]

Volume	Folios	Section	Topics
i	1^v–4^v	First introduction	*Khuṭba*; genesis of the work; praise of al-Ghawrī; apologies for mistakes; contents of the work
i	4^v–66^v	First *majlis*[b]	Questions and answers on various topics of Muslim scholarship (4^v–8^v); stories of the prophets preceding Muḥammad (8^v–48^v); life of the Prophet Muḥammad and the time of the so-called "rightly-guided" (*rāshidūn*) caliphs (48^v–66^v)
i	66^v–111^r	Second *majlis*	History of the Umayyad caliphs (66^v–84^r); history of the ʿAbbasid caliphs up to the time of al-Maʾmūn (84^r–111^r)
i	111^r	First final section and colophon	Prayer; date of the completion of the first volume; reference to the second volume
ii	1^v–3^v	Second introduction	*Khuṭba*; question and answer about the interpretation of a prophetic tradition (1^v–2^r); three useful lessons (sg. *fāʾida*, 2^r–3^v)
ii	3^v–113^r	Continuation of the second *majlis*	History of the ʿAbbasid caliphs from the time of al-Muʿtaṣim up to the time of al-Mustaʿṣim (3^v–40^v); history of the Baḥrī Mamluk rulers (40^v–42^r); history of the Burjī Mamluk rulers and biography of al-Ghawrī up to the beginning of his reign (42^r–113^r)
ii	113^r	Second final section and colophon	Prayer; date of the completion of the second volume

a   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 147–8.

b   The term *majlis* should not be misunderstood in this context as referring to a specific session or salon as it did in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Rather, it is employed here to designate a section or chapter of a book, a usage that is not unheard of in premodern Arabic literature. For this usage of *majlis*, see, e.g., al-Zajjājī, *Majālis al-ʿulamāʾ*; al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis* (on which see Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 94–5); Ibn al-Jawzī (attr.), *Majālis*, in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Salwat al-aḥzān*; al-Hamadhānī, *al-Subāʿiyyāt*; Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 89.

I collected from the oceans of his [that is, the sultan's] useful lessons (*biḥār fawāyidihi* [*sic*]) a drop, and took from the suns of his merits an atom. But I could collect only one of 1,000, nay, one of 100,000, because the useful lessons of his noble *majlis* are an overflowing ocean that has no beginning and no end. [...] I thus collected [them] as much as I could and to the degree that I was able, because I was needy—it has been transmitted from those who [have attained] perfection that a man's honor is [his] knowledge, and the honor of knowledge is money (*māl*). To [my destitute state], one must add physical and bodily weakness. In addition to this, I have not been spared [the presence] of imposters and the envious.[284]

He then describes the contents of his work:

I collected what I had heard from His Noble Station (*min al-maqām al-sharīf*) [that is, the sultan][285] including questions, anecdotes (*nawādir*), biographies (*siyar*) of the pure forefathers, stories of the prophets and messengers [of God] (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn*), narratives about rulers and sultans, humorous as well as serious things, and [reports about] the tricks (*makr*) of women, who are the root of every catastrophe and disaster.[286]

The author then praises the sultan's wisdom and cleverness, describing him as "sultan of the scholars who act [according to their knowledge]" (*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿāmilīn*) and as "sultan of the insightful" (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*).[287] After mentioning the title of his work, he then goes on to explain its structure:

I arranged it into four *majālis*: The introduction of the first *majlis* includes several noble questions, then [it continues] with the stories of the proph-

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284   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 3ʳ–3ᵛ.
285   The formula *al-maqām al-sharīf* appears in sources from the Mamluk period as a title for the Mamluk sultan and his—e.g., Ottoman—peers. It is one of the highest ranking forms of address in Mamluk diplomatic protocol and as such, is structurally comparable to European formulas such as "His/Her Majesty." On this title, see, e.g., al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 67, 111; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 494; Muslu, *Ottomans* 190; Muslu, Attempting 264; Björkman, *Beiträge* 157; Bosworth, Laḳab 628–9.
286   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ᵛ.
287   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ʳ.

ets and messengers [of God]. The second *majlis* [includes] accounts
(*dhikr*) about the rulers and sultans. The third *majlis* [deals with] the wis-
dom of wise men (*ḥikmat al-ḥukamā* [*sic*]). The fourth *majlis* addresses
the ruses (*ḥiyal*) and tricks (*makr*) of women.[288]

The introduction ends with the author's request that readers should bear with
his mistakes.[289]

We learn from this introduction that the author was a long-term client of
al-Ghawrī and that he collected material in his work which, he claims, came
from the ruler's *majlis*. Moreover, he presents a first general description of
the contents of the work: apart from the generic terms "questions" and "anec-
dotes," it includes narratives about people understood in the Islamic tradi-
tion as God's prophets and messengers, as well as biographies and historic
material on rulers of the past. As for the references to the "wisdom of wise
men" (*ḥikmat al-ḥukamā*) and to the "ruses and tricks of women," we cannot
know for sure what the author meant by these terms since those sections of
the work are not available to us. *Ḥikma* could refer to anything from tech-
nical and sophisticated philosophical reflections to proverb-like aphorisms,[290]
and we know from other works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* that members of the
sultan's circle discussed topics of academic philosophy as well gnomic mater-
ial.[291]

As for the "ruses and tricks of women," discussions of this topic are a recur-
ring feature of premodern Arabic literature and are usually associated with
the term *kayd* (ruse, deception, trick) that appears in Q 12:28.[292] This topic
developed into a widespread literary topos[293] that has been thoroughly
addressed in books dedicated exclusively to this theme. Of these, one of the
best known texts is that of ʿAlī b. ʿUmar Ibn al-Batānūnī (fl. end of the ninth/fif-
teenth century), *al-ʿUnwān fī l-iḥtirāz min makāyid al-niswān* (The model of
how to guard oneself against the ruses of women).[294] It contains a large col-
lection of misogynic narratives about immoral women whose ruses ultimately

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288   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ʳ.
289   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 4ʳ–4ᵛ.
290   Cf. the discussion of the term *ḥikma* in section 4.2.8 below.
291   See section 4.2.8 below.
292   Rowson, Irregularity 61.
293   Staffa, Dimensions 44. See also Spies, Erzählstoffe 708. Topos is used here as defined in
       Lake, Intention 350.
294   Arabic title quoted according to Abdel-Malek, Narratives 342.

fail because of God's direct or indirect intervention.[295] It is plausible to assume that the fourth *majlis* of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* was intended to include similar material.

The first *majlis* of the text has come down to us in its entirety. It begins with a series of question-and-answer pairs that closely resemble those in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. The first of these questions deals mostly with issues related to the creation of the world and thus could serve as a kind of introduction to the following historical sections.[296] Subsequently, however, the focus switches to various issues unrelated to the beginning of history, such as the exegesis of several verses of Sura Ṣād; the debate about whether Alexander, the son of Philipp, is the same as the Quranic figure Dhū l-Qarnayn; the question of when the present form of the call to prayer was first used; and why there are several *qirāʾāt* (ways of reading) of the Quran.[297] The text itself states that several questions are included at the beginning of the chapter "so that it is not bare (*ʿārin*)."[298] In addition to this primarily aesthetic argument, the author might have included this material here to highlight the connection between his work and al-Ghawrī's salons; therefore, he began his work with a section that has the form typical for accounts of discussions in the sultan's *majālis*.

After the question-and-answer section and the sentence "we begin [now] after this with the stories of the prophets,"[299] the text starts rather unexpectedly with the story of Adam's death.[300] It continues with a discussion of things the Prophet Idrīs did for the first time,[301] and then turns to a story of how the Prophet Noah hired snakes to keep his ark free from vermin.[302] This narrative is followed by several small textual units, such as jokes and humorous anecdotes that deal with lice, flies, and other vermin and have no connection to the figure of Noah at all.[303] Attention then returns to Noah and the question of how Satan managed to board his ark.[304]

295   Ibn al-Batānūnī, al-ʿUnwān, ed. in Marjiyya, *Shakhṣiyyat al-marʾa* 209–503.
296   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 4ᵛ–5ᵛ.
297   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 4ᵛ–8ᵛ.
298   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ᵛ.
299   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 8ᵛ.
300   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 8ᵛ.
301   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ᵛ–10ʳ.
302   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 13ʳ–14ᵛ.
303   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 14ʳ–15ʳ. On vermin as a topic of humorous texts in Arabic literature, see also van Gelder, Mixtures 101–2.
304   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 15ʳ–15ᵛ.

At first glance, it seems that the first *majlis* begins with a somewhat chaotic agglomeration of narrative material, although the author states several times that it deals with the stories of the prophets. Unlike other works occupied with *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material,[305] for the most part, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* does not provide complete accounts of the life of the individual prophets. Rather, the text includes—as we saw in the cases of Adam, Idrīs, and Noah—only snapshots from their biographies. This pattern also applies to the discussion of other prophetic figures in subsequent sections of the text. How can we explain this?

In the introduction to the work as a whole, the author states that he had collected, among other items, "questions, anecdotes, […] stories of the prophets and messengers, […] and humorous as well as serious things."[306] He based his collection on what he "had heard from His Noble Station [that is, the sultan]"[307] and on "useful lessons from his noble *majlis*."[308] Thus, the author claims that the contents of his work are based on proceedings from al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and on what he had learned directly from the sultan.

The question of whether or not we have reason to believe these claims is thoroughly addressed further below. At present, we can note that the authors' statements about the origin of his material fit well with the structure and contents of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Each of the textual units following the question-and-answer section is introduced by a highlighted word or group of words indicating its type (for example, *qiṣṣa*, *nādira*, or *nukta*),[309] and is, in turn, often followed by the name of the person credited with narrating it. In most cases, this narrator is identified as al-Ghawrī. Thus, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* presents its contents as records of what Sultan al-Ghawrī and other participants in his salons said about a specific figure; hence it sometimes consists of quotations from written sources. The sultan and his fellow narrators, however, are not presented as recounting the stories about a given prophet in their entirety, but as limiting themselves to one or several episodes associated with each prophetic figure. Based on the author's information about the origin of his work, we can postulate that it includes only selective and episodic information on each prophetic figure because this was the way in which the stories associated with them were narrated and discussed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.

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305   On this field of knowledge, see section 4.2.4 below.
306   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ᵛ.
307   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ᵛ.
308   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ʳ.
309   On these terms, see section 4.2.5 below.

Moreover, the author announced in his introduction that his work would include "humorous as well as serious things."[310] As we have seen, in doing this, he followed one of the most important stylistic conventions of premodern Arabic literature. In the first *majlis*, the author's decision to incorporate humorous material into his work, in addition to the serious stories of the prophets, meant that humorous anecdotes and jokes stand next to *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material. The humorous passages, however, do not appear randomly in the text, but take up topics that appear in the stories about the prophets. For instance, jokes and funny stories about flies and lice come after the story how Noah dealt with the problems caused by venom on his ark. According to the author, these humorous textual units are also based on what he had heard during his time as al-Ghawrī's client.[311]

We can now return to the description of the work's contents. The order in which the prophets and messengers are introduced differs slightly from that of other works dealing with the same kind of material, such as Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035) famous *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Bridal sessions about the stories of the prophets). After the episodes about Noah, the text continues with the prophets and messengers Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Bishr, Shuʿayb, al-Khiḍr, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Elias, David, Solomon, Hosea, Daniel, Alexander, Jonah, Zechariah, John, Jesus, the Companions of the Cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*), Khālid b. Sinān,[312] and Ḥanẓala b. Safwān.[313] In between the episodes about these figures, the work includes material only loosely connected to them, for example, an edifying story about a man who entered paradise after the death of his children follows an episode about the Prophet Job,[314] and a story appended to the section about Jesus deals with a poet who traveled to the lands of the Christians and fell in love with a beautiful boy.[315] Moreover, in the case of some prophets and messengers (for example, Ishmael,[316] Joseph,[317] Job,[318] Daniel,[319] and

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310   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ᵛ.

311   This associative addition of non-historical material to a historical narrative resembles the findings in Weintritt, *Formen* 87–92. Weintritt points to the concept of *istiṭrād* which denotes a type of digression that allows authors to combine historical narratives with *adab* material, cf. Weintritt, *Formen* 10, 15, 17–9.

312   On him, see Pellat, Khālid b. Sinān.

313   On him, see Pellat, Ḥanẓala b. Safwān.

314   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 35ᵛ–36ʳ.

315   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 47ʳ–47ᵛ.

316   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 32ʳ.

317   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 33ᵛ.

318   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 35ʳ.

319   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 44ʳ.

Jonah[320]), the text provides introductory passages that include a general char-
acterization as well as often rather detailed chronological information about
the prophetic figure. As these passages are not presented as part of what was
said during the sultan's *majālis*, we can interpret them as additions by the
author. By inserting these short passages, the author provides his work with
a frame that facilitates the arrangement of the episodic material gathered from
the sultan's *majālis*. Moreover, these frame elements also provide a helpful
chronological orientation so readers could navigate more easily through the
text.

The author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* next turns his attention to the bio-
graphy of the Prophet Muḥammad. He begins the Prophet's biography with
a detailed chronology of his early life and mission.[321] This section closely
resembles the aforementioned introductory passages, which precede the
material on some of the prophets and messengers, and is part of the same
narrative frame. After a passage praising Muḥammad and his mission,[322] the
text continues with a singular passage that is of great importance for a proper
understanding of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*:

> Scholars have written many books about the life, the good deeds, the char-
> acteristics, the campaigns, the character traits, and the good qualities of
> this noble Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—, but
> we mention [here only] some [of the things] that we have heard dur-
> ing the debate of our lord the sultan (*min kalām mawlānā l-sulṭān*)—
> may God make his reign last forever—about the characteristics of our
> Prophet—upon whom be blessing and peace—after revising it (*taṣḥīḥ*)
> according to the books of the sublime biography.[323]

In this passage, the author acknowledges the existence of many works about
the topic he is going to discuss, that is, the biography of the Prophet Muḥam-
mad. Yet, he does not quote these earlier works—at least not directly—, but
recounts only what he obtained from the sultan's *kalām* about the Prophet's
life. He does so, however, critically, after consulting other works about Muḥam-
mad's biography and undertaking *taṣḥīḥ* on the material gathered from the
sultan's *kalām*.

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320   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 44ᵛ–45ʳ.
321   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 48ʳ–49ᵛ.
322   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 49ᵛ–50ʳ.
323   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 50ʳ.

Evidently, the translation of the two Arabic terms *kalām* and *taṣḥīḥ* is central for our understanding of this passage. The phrase "*min kalām mawlānā l-sulṭān*" could be translated literally as "from the speech of our lord the sultan,"[324] thus indicating that all the following material about the Prophet was originally narrated by al-Ghawrī. Although this understanding seems to match the basic meaning of the Arabic phrase, it is contradicted by the contents of the subsequent sections of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Only part of the episodic material here is attributed to the sultan, while other, structurally very similar sections are merely introduced by "it was said" (*qīla*)[325] or begin without any information regarding their origin.[326] As the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* usually notes meticulously what material comes from the sultan, the absence of any information that links these episodes to the ruler is a strong indicator that he was not their original narrator. This, in turn, suggests that we should not understand the phrase "*min kalām mawlānā l-sulṭān*" to mean that al-Ghawrī narrated all of the episodes about the Prophet in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Rather, we should translate *kalām* as "conversation," "discussion," or "debate," as given in standard dictionaries.[327] The phrase "*kalām mawlānā l-sulṭān*" thus means here "the conversation/discussion/debate that was headed, convened, and/or organized by our lord the sultan."

The second decisive term in this passage is *taṣḥīḥ*, as it reveals the connection between what was said and done in the sultan's *majālis* and the contents of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. The passage "after undertaking *taṣḥīḥ* on it according to the books of the sublime biography" indicates that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* did not just transcribe the minutes of al-Ghawrī *majālis*. Rather, in some way, he modified the material he claims to have obtained in the sultan's salons in the process of writing his work. Yet, the passage in question provides very little information as to the process itself. The word *taṣḥīḥ* is the *maṣdar* of the verb *ṣaḥḥaḥa*, which has a rather wide range of meanings, including "correction, emendation" as well as "confirming the authenticity of something"[328] and "freeing something from every imperfection."[329] It is difficult to decide which of these meanings applies in the present context. The following material about the Prophet's biography is generally in accordance with Muḥammad

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324   Cf. for the translation of *kalām* as "talk, speech, […] words" Ullmann, *Wörterbuch* i, 334.

325   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 54ʳ, 55ᵛ.

326   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 50ᵛ, 55ʳ.

327   Wehr, *Dictionary* 838 (for all three translations); Ullmann, *Wörterbuch* i, 335 (for "debate").

328   Wehr, *Dictionary* 503 (both translations).

329   Lane, *Lexicon* iv, 1651.

b. Isḥāq's (d. 151/768) widely accepted version of the *sīra*. Yet, we do not know whether this situation reflects the original material that the author gathered in the *majālis* or is the result of later changes. Given this uncertainty, it seems best to translate the Arabic word *taṣḥīḥ* here as "revision," as this term is also rather vague in terms of the scope of textual changes it implies.

The sections following the *taṣḥīḥ* statement provide information on import-ant situations in the Prophet's life and the time of the caliphs Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), ʿUmar (d. 23/644), ʿUthmān, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), and al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (d. 50/670).[330] Like the sections on the prophets and messengers before Muḥammad, the material is arranged chronologically, but does not offer a full account of the history of the period. Among other things, it includes little or almost no information on such important events as the Prophet's first rev-elation, his night journey, his emigration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina, the meeting at al-Ḥudaybiyya, or his final pilgrimage. Instead, it follows the pattern of the previous sections by including entertaining and edifying material that is only very loosely—if at all—related to early Islamic history. Among other things, we find a story by the sultan that is supposed to "confirm (*yuʾayyidu*) the belief in *jinn*s,"[331] by telling how the famous scholar Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) employed the services of one of his *jinn* students to obtain a copy of al-Zamakhsharī's Quran commentary before the latter had made his work known to a larger audience.[332] Another story fol-lows an account of how the Prophet instructed the Meccans in the correct performance of the Islamic ritual prayer and tells how Sultan al-Ghawrī had rebuked a fellow participant in the Friday prayer for speaking during the *imām*'s sermon.[333] Here, the sultan's behavior is not only presented as following the example of the Prophet; the text also points to the comparability of the two events by introducing the story of the sultan's rebuke with the highlighted word *naẓīruhu*, meaning "something similar to it" or "something equivalent to it," that is, something similar to the Prophet's action. Unlike other narrative units inserted into the main historical narrative of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the epis-

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330   On al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī as caliph, see, e.g., Veccia Vaglieri, (al-)Ḥasan b. ʿAlī 241; Cobb, Hashim-ism 79–80. Other Mamluk authors considered al-Ḥasan caliph as well, cf. Ibn al-Ṭūlūnī, *al-Nuzha* 46–7; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 445, 449; al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 105; Anonym-ous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 38ᵛ, 159ᵛ.

331   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 54ʳ–55ᵛ.

332   The same story, though worded differently, is narrated on the authority of the sultan in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 88–9.

333   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 56ᵛ–57ʳ. The same event is narrated in different words and with different details in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 90–1.

ode about the sultan's behavior in prayer is thus not merely edifying, but also serves to communicate a positive image of the ruler. As is shown below, narrative units included for similar reasons become more frequent toward the end of the work.

In addition to the narrative units about early Islamic history and loosely connected anecdotal material, the section of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* under discussion also includes passages belonging to the narrative frame of the work as a whole that provide mainly chronological information. Thus, there is a section that gives the dates of some of the major events in the Prophet's life after his emigration to Medina up to the conquest of Mecca,[334] and another one that provides the date of the Prophet's death and a sketch of the events that immediately followed.[335] In a similar manner, frame passages stand at the beginning of the sections dealing with the caliphates of ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, and al-Ḥasan.[336] By giving chronological data on their respective reigns and providing extremely condensed information on some of the most important events associated with them, these frame passages introduced by the generic term *dhikr khilāfat* (account of the caliphate of ...) form the skeleton of the historical narrative. The author then fleshes out the narrative by adding the material related to the respective historical figures that he claims to have obtained in the sultan's *majlis*.

The second chapter (*majlis*), which makes up the largest part of the preserved text of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, bears the heading "account of the rulers (*mulūk*) and sultans."[337] It contains a chronological presentation of selected aspects of the history of the Islamicate world using the reigns of the most important Muslim rulers (at least in the eyes of its author) as its structuring principle. The chapter begins with an account of the Umayyad caliphs up to their removal by the ʿAbbasids and then follows the history of the latter dynasty up to the fall of Baghdad in 656/1258. After this event, the focus shifts to the Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo, suggesting that the author considered the Mamluk sultans—and not, for example, the ʿAbbasids of Cairo—the real rulers of the Muslim world during the Mongol and post-Mongol periods. While the Baḥrī Mamluk rulers are only given a summary treatment, the history of the Burjī rulers is described in more detail and finally culminates in al-Ghawrī's ascension to rule. Shortly after the beginning of his reign, the historical account breaks off.

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334   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 55ʳ–55ᵛ.
335   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 57ʳ–57ᵛ.
336   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 59ʳ–59ᵛ; 61ʳ–62ʳ; 62ᵛ–63ʳ; 66ʳ.
337   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 66ᵛ.

The internal arrangement of the second chapter mirrors that of the final section of the first chapter: Frame elements usually introduced with the word *dhikr* offer basic, in part chronological information on the reign of each ruler. Often, one or several anecdotes usually presented as going back to what was said in the sultan's *majlis* follow the *dhikr* passages. These anecdotes do not provide a complete account of the reign of the ruler in question, but elucidate—often in an entertaining manner—the ruler's character, deal with particularly famous events during his tenure, or provide the background for witty remarks and aphorisms associated with him. In addition, a section on a particular reign can include information on important historical events not directly related to the respective ruler, such as the death of a celebrated scholar.

Moreover, the second chapter also includes material that is only loosely, if at all, connected to the historical narrative. Often, the respective passages can only be described as comic and appear in clusters dealing with a particular figure or topic. There are, for example, lengthy passages consisting exclusively of jokes and anecdotes about the wise fool Buhlūl,[338] about people who claim to be prophets,[339] about the humorous figures of Qarāqūsh,[340] Juḥā[341] and Shaykh Naṣir al-Dīn,[342] or about people who pass wind in inappropriate situations.[343]

As indicated, the first volume of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* covers the history of the caliphate up to the death of al-Maʾmūn. The fact that the historical account comes to an intermediate stop here might have been for the simple practical reason that the available writing space in the volume was used up. The first volume ends with a short colophon that includes information on the production of the manuscript cited above.

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338 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 97ʳ–99ᵛ. On this figure, see Marzolph, *Narr*; Marzolph, *Focusees* 123; Dols, *Madman* 356–9; Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* [both volumes], Indices s.v. "Buhlūl."

339 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 7ʳ–8ᵛ. See also section 4.2.5 below.

340 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 37ʳ–37ᵛ. On this figure, see, e.g., Shoshan, Jokes; Shoshan, *Popular Literature* 357–8; Sobernheim, *Ḳarāḵūsh* 613–4; Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* [both volumes], Indices s.v. "Qarāqūš."

341 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 19ᵛ–19ʳ.

342 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 79ᵛ–80ʳ. On these two figures, see, e.g., Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* [both volumes], Indices s.v. "Nasreddin Hoca," "Mollā Naṣraddin," "Ǧuḥā"; Marzolph, *Focusees*; Marzolph, *Cuha*; Marzolph and Baldauf, *Hodscha*; Shoshan, *Popular Literature* 356; Spies, *Erzählstoffe* 702.

343 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 77ʳ–79ʳ. On this kind of material, see Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 43–4.

The second volume begins with a very short *khuṭba* and a prayer for al-Ghawrī.[344] The text then continues with the introduction proper (*muqaddima*), consisting of four parts. The first part recounts a discussion the sultan had in Ramaḍān 920/October–November 1514 with the Shāfiʿī chief judge about the interpretation of a *ḥadīth*.[345] The first of the following three sections of the introduction called *fāʾida* (useful lesson) presents a selection from the so-called testament (*waṣīya*) of the Prophet Muḥammad to his son-in-law ʿAlī, including advice on how to behave toward one's wife.[346] The second and third *fāʾida*s both feature edifying material on animals.[347]

After the third *fāʾida*, the text states "So let us return now to history (*tārīkh*)."[348] This statement demonstrates that the author of the text understood it as dealing with history—and not, for example, *adab*—despite the inclusion of material that strays beyond strictly historical topics. The text then continues the historical narrative from the time of the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Muʿtaṣim onward.

In roughly the middle of the second volume of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the narrative takes up an additional topic, the birth of Sultan al-Ghawrī in 848/1444–5, which is described at length and in vivid color as an event of cosmic significance.[349] In what follows, the author inserted accounts of important events from the sultan's early life at chronologically suitable points into the historical narrative. All of these accounts present the future ruler in an extremely favorable light, with some of them showing his reign over Egypt as the result of divine preordination.[350] The closer the narrative comes to al-Ghawrī's reign, the more the sultan's biography predominates, with the last pages narrating exclusively the sultan's way to office and the first weeks of his tenure up to al-ʿĀdil Ṭūmānbāy's death in Dhū l-Qaʿda 906/May 1501.[351] The text ends

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344 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 1ᵛ.

345 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ.

346 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 2ʳ–3ʳ. Texts that purported to be the Prophet's testament to ʿAlī were highly popular, as is attested to by manuscript evidence, see, e.g., Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis* iii, 446; Mach, *Catalogue* 252; Arberry, *Handlist* vii, 24; Nemoy, *Manuscripts* 153. The text included in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is identical, in part, to other versions of the Prophet's testament, such as, e.g., MS Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Arabic Suppl. 423, here fols. 34ʳ–35ʳ.

347 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 3ʳ; 3ʳ–3ᵛ.

348 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 3ᵛ.

349 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 51ᵛ–54ʳ. See section 4.1.2.1 for an analysis of aspects of the sultan's biography relevant for the study at hand in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.

350 See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 64ʳ–65ʳ, 65ʳ–67ᵛ, 95ᵛ–96ʳ, 104ʳ–104ᵛ. See also section 6.2.2 below.

351 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 105ʳ–113ʳ.

with a short colophon.[352] According to the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the information on the sultan's biography came from the ruler himself, as he introduces a passage on the sultan's early life with the words "account (*dhikr*) of a small part (*nubdha*) of the narrations of our lord the sultan—may his victory be glorious—from the day of his birth to the day of his [ascension to] rule (*wilāyatuhu*)."[353]

3.1.3.3   Authorship, Context of Origin, and Intended Readership

We can glean a considerable amount of information on the otherwise unknown author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* from his work. He had been a client of the sultan for about ten years and had access to the latter's *majālis*. Moreover, he presented his work as a collection of the useful lessons (*fawāʾid*) he had obtained during his time with the sultan. As a whole, his main motivation behind writing *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is obviously to praise his patron al-Ghawrī, who is reminded of the author's purportedly destitute state in the introduction. It thus seems evident that the author wrote the work for the sultan in the hope of his ongoing protective patronage and to solicit acts of benefit patronage.

In his presentation of the intellectual life at the sultan's court, the author—unlike al-Sharīf in his *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*—did not accord a prominent place to himself, rather he highlighted the contributions of the sultan first and those of important figures such as the Shāfiʿī chief judge second. The author's language suggests that he was a native speaker of Arabic, and nothing indicates that his cultural background was anything other than that of a local Egyptian scholar. The author was probably affiliated with the Ḥanafī school of law, to which his work pays special attention.[354]

If the information on the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* collected in the preceding paragraphs reminds the reader of what is known about the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, then this is not by chance. Rather, the available evidence indicates that the two anonymous authors are one and the same person or were at least closely familiar with each other's work.

What is known about their social position and background speaks in favor of the assumption that the two men were in fact the same person. Both were long-time clients of Sultan al-Ghawrī and participants in his *majālis*. In their account of these events, neither put himself in the foreground. Rather, both authors were interested in highlighting the role of the sultan and also focused on the

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352   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 113ʳ.
353   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 63ᵛ.
354   See, e.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 88ʳ–89ᵛ, 102ʳ–103ᵛ, 105ᵛ–106ʳ.

contributions of high-ranking members of the local scholarly elite. Moreover, both men were Arabic-speaking ʿulamāʾ and probably Ḥanafīs.

In addition to this—admittedly not very conclusive—evidence, we must consider the results of the codicological analysis. As demonstrated above, the manuscripts of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* were both copied by the same person. Several possible scenarios could explain the identity of the scribe of the two manuscripts, three of which appear especially plausible: First, both manuscripts could be autographs written by the author of the respective texts. Second, both texts could have been composed by the same author, who then commissioned the same scribe to produce the preserved fair copies. Third, the two texts could be the work of two different authors, but later copied by the same scribe. While the first two possible scenarios would support the assumption that both texts share the same author, the third option points at least to a common context of origin.

Still, none of these observations establishes beyond doubt that the two men were identical or at least knew each other's work. However, there is one further piece of evidence, namely, the large degree of word-for-word overlap between the introductions of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Unlike the limited similarities between the introductions of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which are best explained by their common context of production and the conventions applied therein, the considerable overlap between the introductions of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* also pertain to passages for which no underlying conventions are readily perceivable, as the following examples show.

In the introductions of the two works, their respective authors explain that they were unable to write down all the useful lessons learned in the sultan's *majlis*. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, this passage reads:

فجمعت من بحار فوايده قطرة واخذت من شموس محاسنه ذرة ولم اقدر ان اجمع الا واحدا

من الف بل من ماية الف

I collected from the oceans of his useful lessons a drop, and took from the suns of his merits an atom. But I could collect only one of 1,000, nay, one of 100,000.[355]

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355   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ʳ.

The corresponding passage in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is almost completely identical:

جمعت من بحار فوايده قطرة ومن شموس محاسنه ذرة لم اقدر ان اجمع الا واحدا من الف

بل من ماية الف

I collected from the oceans of his useful lessons a drop, and from the suns of his merits an atom. I could collect only one of 1,000, nay, one of 100,000.[356]

The explanations of why the authors could not include everything they had learned in the sultan's *majlis* into their works are again extremely similar. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, we read:

جمعت بقدر جهدي وطاقتي وبحسب فقدى وفاقتي لاني كنت فقير الحال [...]

I made a collection, to the degree that I endeavored and was able, as I was in a poor state [...].[357]

In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the author states:

لاني كنت فقير الحال [...] جمعت بقدر طاقتي وبحسب فقدى وفاقتي [...]

As I had been in a poor state, [...] I made a collection to the degree that I was able and in accordance with my indigence and neediness [...].[358]

It would be far-fetched to assume that two authors who worked in the same social context and who composed two texts that resemble each other so closely could have arrived at such similar formulations independently from each other. Rather, it appears evident that one of them knew of the other's work or that the two works were indeed penned by the same person. In both cases, we could understand *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* as a kind of sequel to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, with the latter work focusing mainly on the questions discussed in the sultan's *majlis*, while the former included primarily the anecdotes presented there.

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356   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.
357   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ʳ.
358   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3–4.

There is one piece of evidence that might support the idea that the works are not by the same author. The introductions of both *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* state that their authors had frequented the sultan and his *majlis* for ten years when they composed their works. Assuming that the dates in the colophons of the manuscripts indicate the time of completion of the texts, then *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* was written almost two years later than *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. If we wish to maintain the hypothesis that both texts are the work of the same author, we might understand the references to the ten years of court attendance not to specify a precise period of time, but rather, figuratively, to indicate a long time span. Alternatively, the reference to ten years could indicate that the author had participated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* for ten years, then stopped attending these events and completed his writing of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* about two years later. Yet, although these explanantions for the conflicting statements regarding the "ten years" are not entirely conclusive, the close connection between the works cannot be doubted.

Unlike *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* which—according to their authors' statements—are largely based on the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and for the most part do not rely directly on earlier written sources, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* clearly states that parts of its contents are based on older works.[359] In several instances in which material from the sultan's *majlis* is quoted, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* notes explicitly that the person narrating a given historical anecdote did so "quoting" (*naqlan min/ʿan*)[360] a certain work. The works being quoted, however, are often unnamed and referred to only by such generic descriptions as "stories about the prophets" (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*)[361] or "biographies" (*siyar*).[362] Identifying these unnamed works without any information as to their titles[363] is a complicated and time-consuming endeavor, especially, but not only, when anecdotal material is concerned.[364]

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359   See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 147.

360   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ᵛ, 57ᵛ, 68ʳ; ii, 39ᵛ. For similar references, see also *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 17ʳ, 56ʳ, 65ʳ, 67ʳ, 77ᵛ, 82ᵛ; ii, fols. 31ᵛ, 39ᵛ.

361   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 8ᵛ.

362   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 67ʳ, 68ʳ.

363   *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* does not provide chains of transmitters (sg. *isnād*) of the sort that form the main evidence for source studies of earlier Arabic historiographical works. On the importance of *isnād*s for source studies, see Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 92–5, 100–3; Günther, Assessing 76, 79–81, 95.

364   On the problems of identifying the sources of works quoting anecdotal material, see also, e.g., Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 76; and for humoristic material, see Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 66.

Moreover, a sample analysis of four representative sections from different parts of the work[365] shows that a thorough and complete source analysis *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* would be of limited value in relation to the research questions of the present study and would not be likely to produce many new insights into the history of Arabic literature. Unlike earlier works from the ʿAbbasid period that rely largely on otherwise lost older material and for which an analysis of their sources adds to our knowledge about learning and the transmission of knowledge during the first centuries of Islam,[366] *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* cites in the selected passages—as far as it could be ascertained—only well-known and widely available works.[367]

The most often quoted source for historical anecdotes[368] in the passages in question is Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) famous *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* (The [reports] about the deaths of famous persons and the news on the children of time).[369] The only other source used in the passages analyzed on the Islamic period is the well-known mirror-for-princes *Sirāj al-mulūk* (The lamp of rulers) by Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126 or 525/1131),[370] of which we know that al-Ghawrī owned a copy while he was still an *amīr*.[371]

The presence of these two works among the main sources of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is confirmed by a cursory study of other passages of the work, as well as by the few explicit source references in the text. Apart from the Quran and standard *ḥadīth* collections, in the sections on Islamic history the text mentions only three works that can be clearly identified as direct sources:[372] Ibn Khal-

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365   The following passages were chosen: the accounts of the prophets Adam and Idrīs (Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ᵛ–10ʳ); the caliphate of ʿUthman b. ʿAffān (Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 61ʳ–62ᵛ); the caliphate of al-Muṭīʿ li-Llāh (r. 334–63/946–74; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 21ʳ–22ᵛ); and the caliphate of al-Muqtadī bi-Amr Allāh (r. 467–87/1075–94; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 31ʳ–32ᵛ).

366   For source critical studies of such works, see Fleischhammer, *Quellen*; Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen*; Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen*; Scheiner, Library.

367   See appendix 1 for what is known about the sources of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.

368   Insights about the sources of the selected passages are limited to the anecdotal material, as it has been impossible to ascertain the sources of the frame passages that consist mainly of dates and proper names.

369   On this work, see also section 4.2.5 below.

370   On this work, see also section 4.2.8 below.

371   MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1396. On this manuscript, see Ohta, Bindings 215–6; Flemming, Activities 255; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 717.

372   In the section dealing with the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd (r. 125–6/743–4; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 82ᵛ), there is one reference to a work by Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176), for which, however, no identical *Vorlage* could be located. The reference to Muḥammad b.

likān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*,[373] al-Ṭurṭūshī's *Sirāj al-mulūk*,[374] and ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī's (d. 346/957) *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar* (Meadows of gold and mines of jewels),[375] with al-Masʿūdī's work appearing only once as a clearly named source. Thus, all identified sources that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* used for his account of Islamic history are well-known and with the exception of al-Masʿūdī's text, are comparatively late works.

The situation is very similar with regard to the accounts of the pre-Islamic period analyzed here. The stories of the prophets Adam and Idrīs are entirely dependent on a single source, namely the well-known collection of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* connected with the name of al-Kisāʾī (fl. fifth/eleventh century?).[376] A cursory survey of other passages on prophets before Muḥammad confirms that this work is indeed the source of much—and very probably most—of the material on this topic in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.[377] Thus, in its part on pre-Islamic history, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is also largely dependent on well-known, widely available, and comparatively late material.

In light of these results, an exhaustive study of all of the sources used in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* does not seem worthwhile. It is, however, important to understand the intertextual relationships between the main sources of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and the work itself and to study how it relates to these earlier works.

To this end, it is helpful to compare selected passages in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* with their respective *Vorlage* in the identified sources. In the case of Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, two anecdotes that appear in the account of the caliphate of the ʿAbbasid al-Muṭīʿ li-Llāh of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* lend themselves to comparison. The first deals with the conquest of the city of Shīrāz by the Buyid ruler ʿImād al-Dawla (r. 321–38/923–49), while the second recounts the behavior of the famous philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) in a *majlis* of the Hamdanid Sayf al-Dawla (r. 333–56/945–67).[378] A comparison of these anec-

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Yazīd Ibn al-Mubarrad's (d. 286/899) *al-Kāmil fī l-lugha wa-l-adab* (The complete book on linguistics and the knowledge [of language]) in Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 74ᵛ, is part of a quotation.

373　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 65ʳ, 86ᵛ.

374　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 31ᵛ, 39ᵛ.

375　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 77ᵛ. The text that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* claimed to have quoted could not be located in the work in question. However, there is another, traceable quotation from al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab* in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, see Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 7ʳ.

376　On this material, see also section 4.2.4 below.

377　See appendix 1.

378　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 21ʳ–21ᵛ, 22ʳ–22ᵛ. On this narrative, see also section 4.2.7 below.

dotes in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* with the corresponding sections in Ibn Khal-
likān shows that the texts are almost entirely identical.[379] In the anecdote on
ʿImād al-Dawla, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* added only the name of
the main protagonist at the beginning of the passage to make clear whom he
was speaking about. Moreover, he slightly abridged the text and in a few cases
replaced rare words with more common synonyms. The discrepancies between
the two texts are so slight that they may not be an active reformulation by the
author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, but could be the result of textual variants
among existing copies of *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*.

In the al-Fārābī anecdote, there is also a considerable word-for-word overlap
between the two versions of the anecdote, which clearly tell the same story. Yet
in his work, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* paraphrases considerable sec-
tions of Ibn Khallikān's original text, thereby using simpler language than the
original. Thus, in this case, an active engagement of the author with the text is
clearly discernable.

As for the quotation from al-Ṭurṭūshī's *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, in the sections under
investigation, which recounts a conversation between the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk
(d. 485/1092) and an unnamed ruler,[380] a comparison with the original version
of the text[381] shows that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* paraphrased and
abbreviated the introduction of the anecdote, but copied—almost verbatim—
al-Ṭurṭūshī's rendering of the conversation between the two men. Therefore, in
light of the evidence we have examined up to this point, we can conclude that
the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* usually quoted his sources faithfully, but
sometimes changed parts of the quoted text to shorten it or to make it more
easily accessible.

A look at the selected section about the prophets before Muḥammad con-
firms this result: Both the stories of Adam and Idrīs in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*[382]
closely follow the text attributed to al-Kisāʾī;[383] the text of these stories is some-
times reproduced verbatim and sometimes abbreviated and paraphrased. The
fact that the degree of overlap between *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and the text
attributed to al-Kisāʾī is generally smaller than in the cases of al-Ṭurṭūshī and
Ibn Khallikān should not surprise us, as manuscripts of the work known under
al-Kisāʾī's name "differ considerably in size, contents, and even arrangement of

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379   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* iii, 399–400 (ʿImād al-Dawla); v, 155–6 (al-Fārābī).
380   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 31ᵛ–32ʳ.
381   Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-mulūk* 379–80.
382   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 8ᵛ–10ʳ.
383   Al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ* 143, 150–2.

the stories."[384] It seems plausible to assume that the differences between the quoted passages in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and modern editions of the work can be explained, at least in part, by its differing versions.

In sum, we can conclude that there is significant word-for-word overlap between the anecdotes included in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and several comparatively late and widely available earlier works. How can we explain these results, given that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* claims that his work was based on what was said in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*?

As mentioned, the text itself states that at least some of the anecdotes narrated in the *majālis* were quoted from written sources. We can assume that this applies to most of the anecdotal material that, according to the author's claims, came from the sultan's *majālis* and was probably read aloud from written sources during these meetings before it found its way into the work. This assumption fits well with evidence from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* on the activities in the salons. Al-Sharīf repeatedly mentions that various people, whom he does not name, read during these events from books of history (sg. [*kitāb*] *al-tārīkh*) and that those present commented on what they had heard.[385] In at least one case, we can identify the work used in the readings al-Sharīf describes as Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*,[386] that is, one of the main sources for the contents of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.

With regard to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the contents of the work and what we can ascertain about the history of the only known two-volume manuscript indicate that it was written and received in a courtly context. As stated, the main objective of the work was to praise Sultan al-Ghawrī and his qualifications as a ruler in general, particularly his virtues of knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, we can conclude that the sultan and those close to him were the primary audience of the work, although we do not have as much information about the authorial intentions behind the work and its reception as we do for *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

Yet, we know that the intended readership of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* must have been familiar with the basic elements of Islamic history and the Islamic understanding of prophethood before Muḥammad in order to completely grasp and appreciate its contents. The work sees no need for detailed introductions of most of the religious and historical figures that it speaks about, rather, it often narrates only selected anecdotes about a given person, such that only those with considerable background knowledge can fully appreciate it.

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384   Nagel, al-Kisāʾī 176.

385   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 213–7, 219, 235–7, 251–2, 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 97; 114–5; 128–9; 132.

386   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 251–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 128.

This observation suggests that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* wrote his work with a specific readership in mind, one with at least a basic level of education. For this readership, he further enhanced the value of his work by adding the chronology of the frame sections and other information on the figures that appear in the anecdotes he collected. Thereby, he improved both the edifying potential of his work as well as the clarity of its structure, making it more useful to readers who not only wanted to learn what was said and done in al-Ghawrī's *majlis* and to acquire information on the sultan's biography, but were also interested in improving, updating, or reviewing their knowledge of pre-Islamic and Islamic history and the literary material related to it.

3.1.4   *The Genre of the Texts*

After the discussion of the individual texts of our main sources, we can now ask what these three works have in common. First, these three texts are not limited to a single topic, but address questions and include material from various fields of scholarship and literary writing. In the case of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the broad thematic horizon of the works is mainly reflected in the question-and-answer sections that form the bulk of the contents of these works. Yet, these two works also include anecdotes, aphorisms, and other short pieces of poetry and prose that deal with historical events or are included mainly for their literary value. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the topics of Islamic history and the stories of the prophets before Muḥammad are clearly dominant, but this work also includes textual units that are of mainly literary interest and discussions that address various fields of knowledge, such as *ḥadīth* studies, *tafsīr*, and Quran recitation. Thus, one common characteristic of all three works is the great level of thematic variety.

Second, all three texts rely on a question-and-answer pattern to present at least part of the knowledge included. While this structural element is predominant in the cases of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* uses it to a more limited extent. However, even in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the question-and-answer section is accorded a place of honor at the beginning of the work and links it to the broader literary and intellectual context to which it belongs.

Third, these three works come from the same context, one that is distinctly characteristic of the court, and claim to be based on what was said and done during the *majālis* of al-Ghawrī. All three titles feature a reference to these events and/or the person who convened them. This focus on their patron and his salons also shapes the introductions of the three texts, which all refer explicitly to the sultan's *majlis*; this makes the reference to the sultan's courtly *majālis* a defining characteristic all of them share.

Fourth, when the Ottomans conquered the Mamluk Sultanate, all three texts were considered so valuable that they were taken to Istanbul. This was most probably not only because of the worth of these manuscripts as physical objects. Rather, the Ottoman conquerors recognized that these manuscripts were pieces of Mamluk courtly material culture that were closely connected to the ruling group they had just defeated and had served the representation of rule of their enemies, the Mamluks. Arguably, it was the close connection between these texts and the court of the Mamluks that made these manuscripts attractive spoils of war.

Fifth, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jaw-hariyya* are not just minutes of the proceedings of the *majālis*, but polyvalent literary texts that clearly go beyond mere records,[387] although it seems possible that they were based on written notes that their authors had taken during al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. If we want to use the term "minutes" at all, then these antecedents of the works, which we have no proof of, could be referred to thus. However, as literary texts, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* can be approached, interpreted, and received in various ways.[388] They attest to the hands of authors who shaped them and dedicated them to a patron,[389] selected and arranged the material, added introductory and concluding sections, supplied additional material that did not come from the sultan's *majālis* but helped to make the works more accessible and aesthetically enjoyable, and sometimes raised their own voices to introduce or comment on individual textual elements. As shown below, these processes of literarization and narrativization to which the texts bear witness must be taken into account when we use them as historical sources.

Sixth, all texts are written with a specific set of intentions in mind that can be subsumed, mainly, under the terms "securing or soliciting patronage" and "demonstrating the author's education and learning." Yet, there is more to it than this. The texts were also composed to be read and used by people who wanted to learn more about the sultan's salons and prepare themselves for comparable social events. Thus, all the texts could serve as instructive readings for anyone who was going to partake in entertaining and edifying discussions in an Islamicate environment. For *al-Kawkab al-durrī* at least, the reading note at the

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387   For the same observation regarding a similar Mughal text, see Kollatz, *Inspiration* 286.

388   The present study's conceptualization of literary texts is based on Bauer, Communication, esp. 24–6. On "literary" and "literature" in a premodern Islamicate context, see also Günther, Introduction xviii–xx.

389   On dedications in Mamluk literary culture, see Bauer, Communication 26–9.

beginning of the manuscript demonstrates that members of al-Ghawrī's court indeed took note of this text and read at least parts of it.

Thus, the texts are—if we take their claims about their origin seriously—the outcomes of at least two interrelated communication processes: That which took place between the sultan and the participants in his *majālis*, including the author, on the one hand, and that between the author and his audience on the other.[390] The latter might, in turn, use the works to prepare themselves for future acts of communication resembling the one between the sultan and the members of his court, or use the texts—in the case of the sultan—in a program of political legitimation and representation.

The communication processes on which these works are based are decisive in determining the genre[391] of Arabic literature to which the three texts belong. The work of German Arabist Lale Behzadi is particularly relevant here. In one of her studies on Arabic literature in ʿAbbasid and Buyid times, Behzadi describes, for the first time in detail, a genre of Arabic literature that is characterized by the same communicative origin and function as our main sources: the genre of courtly *majālis* works.[392] According to Behzadi, this type of literature is part of the broader category of court literature that served the elite's efforts to acquire "education, style and awareness."[393] In this context, *majālis* works provided readers with material that members of the highest echelons of society could use to enhance their own refinement: "stories, texts and pieces of news that had to come along educating, exciting and amusing, but not without a certain intellectual standard—to be presented at the soirées and salons."[394] Behzadi goes on:

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390   On literary works and communicative acts in Mamluk literature, see Bauer, Communication, esp. 23, 53; Bauer, Anthologien, esp. 94, 98, 100; Bauer, Literature 108–9; van Steenbergen, Discourse 2, 6, 19, 26. As van Steenbergen, Discourse 5–6, points out, the communicative processes in which literary texts were involved could be highly asymmetrical, depending on the status of the participating parties, as is also the case in our sources.

391   My understanding of the concept of "genre" follows Kilpatrick, Genre, esp. 34. For reflections on the applicability of the concept to Arabic literature, see Allen, Period 4–5. For generic classifications as found in premodern Arabic literature, see Schoeler, Einteilung; van Gelder, Attempts. On the problems of delineating genres in Arabic literature, see Naaman, *Literature* 128–9; Talib, *Epigram* 2–10; and for genres in non-Western literatures more broadly, see Conermann and El Hawary (eds.), *Genres*.

392   Other publications mentioning this genre in passing include Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 151; Sadan, Death 131; van Gelder, Attempts 28; Kollatz, *Inspiration* 59–61.

393   Behzadi, Art 166.

394   Behzadi, Art 166. In part, see also Kilpatrick, Selection 339.

[These works] could be used as manuals for intellectual court life. They showed also the horizon and education of the author and compiler. Above that, they were the currency in which the writers, authors and scholars paid back the protection and livelihood they enjoyed under the reign of the respective caliph, governor or emir.[395]

Yet, as Behzadi also makes clear, these works were sometimes more than mines of useful information collected by their authors and put at the disposal of professional readers such as *nudamāʾ*.[396] The example that Behzadi discusses in detail in her study—Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's (d. ca. 414/1023)[397] *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* (The book of pleasure and enjoyment/companionship)[398]— "documents"[399] the nightly conversations its author had with his patron, the Buyid vizier Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn Ibn Saʿdān (d. 374/984–5).[400]

[Thus,] this book has several functions: it provides evidence for [the author's] nights at the court; it is the favour in return for having been chosen as the companion of the vizier; it shows the educated and cultivated state of the author; it can be used by other readers either to amuse and educate themselves or to entertain others and organize a social evening.[401]

Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa includes not only "information about several fields of knowledge, especially philosophy, theology, rhetoric and behavior in general,"[402] but also contains entertaining anecdotes that are usually placed at the end of accounts about the nightly conversations on which the work is based.[403] They are told by the first-person narrator, who can be identified

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395   Behzadi, Art 167.

396   Behzadi, Art 167.

397   On this author, see, e.g., Behzadi, Intellektuelle 307–9; Bergé, al-Tawḥīdī; Kraemer, *Humanism* 212–22.

398   Translation quoted from Behzadi, Art 165.

399   Behzadi, Art 167.

400   On this man and his intellectual environment, see, e.g., Kraemer, *Humanism* 191–206 and *passim*.

401   Behzadi, Art 167.

402   Behzadi, Art 165.

403   Behzadi, Art 165, 169. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 309–10. For examples of such anecdotes, see, e.g., al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* i, 28; ii, 83–4, 103, 162–3, 164. Often, the accounts of individual nights also end with selected verses of poetry, as in, e.g., al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* i, 41, 49–50, 196–7, 222, 226; ii, 152–3, 199–201; or with wise sayings, as in, e.g., al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* ii, 49, 92; iii, 85.

with the author al-Tawḥīdī in so far as the latter "claims to be in personae one of the two dialogue partners [appearing in the text] and the narrator."[404] The remainder of the conversations usually deal with scholarly and literary topics specified by the vizier's questions. Here, the difference in status between Ibn Saʿdān and al-Tawḥīdī clearly influences the course of the conversation.[405] Seldom does the author include material that does not come from conversations in the vizier's *majlis*.[406] Still, al-Tawḥīdī's work is more than "a pure report, more than submitting details and events."[407] It is a literary work shaped by its author, intended to be "entertaining, educating and stimulating"[408] and readable in a variety of ways by diverse audiences.[409] Summing up some of her main findings, Behzadi writes:

> Court literature is supposed to summarize what has been talked about in the evenings in order to give the potential reader the essence of the sessions and not to bother him with unnecessary details. By choosing the valuable pieces of the conversation the writer proves his ability to abbreviate. He forms a text corpus which no longer is a mere reflection of what happened at the *majlis*; instead he takes the raw material and creates something for an audience that was not present at court or would reread the shared ideas and discussions in an entertaining way. It is clear that the writer was not supposed to take the minutes; rather he should and would refine what has been discussed and by doing this raise himself as well as the conversation partners.[410]

Let us pause here and compare our findings about our main sources with Behzadi's description of the genre of courtly *majālis* works in general and al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* in particular. Clearly, our main sources can well be subsumed under the category of "court literature," given what we know about their contents, their dramatis personae, the context of their origin, their patron, their intended readership, and the history of the manuscripts. All of these elements point to the Mamluk court as their original social context—a finding that stands in conflict with characterizations of the Mamluk period as

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404   Behzadi, Art 168. On this point, see also Behzadi, Art 172–3.
405   Behzadi, Art 169. See also Behzadi, Intellektuelle 309–10.
406   Behzadi, Art 176. See also Kraemer, *Humanism* 217. For an example of such material, see al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ* i, 201–2.
407   Behzadi, Art 172.
408   Behzadi, Art 172.
409   For an overview of possible readings, see Behzadi, Art 174–5.
410   Behzadi, Art 175.

a time in which courts played only a comparatively limited role in intellectual and literary life.[411]

Yet, as Behzadi notes, "court literature" is a rather broad term that can be used to refer to various types of literature.[412] Therefore, she further narrows down the genre she describes by referring to it as *majālis* texts from courtly contexts. All the characteristics of this type of literature she enumerates also apply to our main sources: They were written to provide material for personal refinement, education, and entertainment—material that could be used by entertainers and other people taking part in the *majlis* of a high-ranking person. For this purpose, witty anecdotes and amusing stories are placed next to scholarly information in an arrangement that sometimes seems chaotic, at first glance, but is enjoyable and entertaining. The inclusion of anecdotes alongside other types of material and their peculiar arrangement are also identified by other authors, such as Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Joseph Sadan, Stefan Leder, and Hilary Kilpatrick, as important features of *majālis* texts.[413] Moreover, as we saw especially in the case of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, but also in the structuring elements in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, our main sources also demonstrate their authors' own learning and refinement and thus fulfill another requirement of what constitutes, according to Behzadi, a courtly *majālis* work. Moreover, just as Behzadi explains, the three works can be seen as an effort to "pay back" the support and patronage their authors had enjoyed from al-Ghawrī.

Yet, our three main sources not only fit well into the genre of courtly *majālis* works Behzadi describes, but also have numerous features in common with

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411   Cf., e.g., Bauer, Communication 23; Bauer, Shāʿir 719–20; Herzog, Culture 145; Muhanna, *World* 72 (for literary life); Muhanna, *World* 20; Muhanna, Century 352 (for literary and intellectual life). See also Bauer, Search 153–4, 156; al-Musawi, *Republic* 81, 127, 248, 263; Talib, *Epigram* 89. For the specific case of courtly patronage of poetry, see also Larkin, Poetry 220–2; Talib, *Epigram* 86, 88; Monroe and Pettigrew, Decline 166. For a critical approach to these assumptions, see van Steenbergen, Discourse 2–5.

412   Behzadi, Art 167. For the same problem in the study of Persian court literature, see Meisami, Genres 233. On Islamicate court culture more broadly, see, e.g., Kilpatrick, Selection; Schoeler, *Genesis* 54–67; Flemming, Activities 253; Fetvacı, *Picturing*, esp. 20; de Bruijn, Courts, esp. 384; Hirschler, *Damascus* 26–7.

413   Cf. in addition to the quotations from Behzadi's work cited above, Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 151 (on the different types of material included in *majālis* works); Sadan, Death 131 (on the "chaotic style" of texts connected to *majālis*); Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature 17 (on the lack of an "overall thematic organization" and the various types of textual material included). On the connection between prose anecdotes and *majālis*, see also Beeston, al-Hamadhānī 127; Robinson, Memory 22, 26; Robinson, Paradise 152–3; and on the lack of a "rigid organization" in Arabic court literature in general, see Kilpatrick, Selection 349.

al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*. All four texts not only offer informa-
tion for participants of future social events, but also document what took place
during specific *majālis* convened by high-ranking political figures, thus they
provide information on a clearly identified set of courtly occasions and con-
vey a positive image of their host. What is more, there is also a considerable
similarity in the contents of al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* and the
accounts of al-Ghawrī's salons. Furthermore, the claim that first-person narrat-
ors are identical to the authors of the texts and the fact that they have similar
hierarchic positions relative to the heads of the *majālis* are comparable in all
four texts.

Moreover, in composing the texts, al-Tawḥīdī and the authors of our three
main sources all claim to have relied primarily on material from the *majālis*
they described in their works. Yet, none of them just give a report of the pro-
ceedings of these events. Rather, all the authors composed literary texts written
to edify and entertain at the same time. In this process, they carefully selected
the material they decided to include to make their texts as interesting and intel-
lectually stimulating as possible, thereby casting a favorable light on both their
patrons and their own skills as literary authors.

In light of these similarities, we should understand our three texts about al-
Ghawrī's salons as belonging to the genre of courtly *majālis* texts as described
by Behzadi. Moreover, all three texts closely parallel al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ
wa-l-muʾānasa*; their most important shared characteristic is the claim that
their contents are based on specific *majālis* and that they are thus, at least par-
tially, reflections of extra-textual events.[414]

Why would authors of the late Mamluk period write texts in a genre associ-
ated with ʿAbbasid times? Is it possible that the parallels between al-Tawḥīdī's
Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa and our three main sources are the result of late
Mamluk authors consciously emulating this famous earlier work or related
texts?

In favor of a direct textual relationship between the accounts of al-Ghawrī's
majālis and al-Tawḥīdī's oeuvre is a direct quotation in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* from
one of al-Tawḥīdī's works,[415] even if the quoted text is not *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-*

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414   There are also noteworthy differences between al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*
        and our main sources; for example, our texts lack al-Tawḥīdī's complicated frame struc-
        ture and multilayered character (on which see esp. Behzadi, *Art* 168–71, 176–9). Moreover,
        the texts on al-Ghawrī *majālis* give center stage to the ruler, while the narrator is the most
        important figure in *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* (cf. Behzadi, *Art* 168–9).
415   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 177–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 53–4.

muʾānasa, but his *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir* (Insights and treasures).[416] More-over, one of the *majālis* participants refers to *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* in one of his writings.[417] Thus, although there is no direct evidence that the authors of our main sources had access to *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*, we can at least say that members of al-Ghawrī's court were familiar with al-Tawḥīdī's writings.

Nevertheless, it makes sense to consider our main sources part of a genre that had blossomed centuries before their composition, although we currently do not know of any comparable works about the *majālis* of earlier Mamluk rulers or indeed any other works of this genre written in the Mamluk Sultanate before al-Ghawrī's reign. Writers of the Mamluk period are known to have used works from ʿAbbasid times as sources of inspirations and models of emulation.[418] This tendency to follow ʿAbbasid examples led to what Irwin called a "literary renaissance"[419] that resulted in the writing of works that had "a backward-looking flavor."[420] Hence, it comes as no surprise that Mamluk authors would write works in a genre that had been used hundreds of years ago. Moreover, the choice of this genre tallies well with our earlier finding that Mamluk court culture was significantly shaped by that of the ʿAbbasid period.[421]

Thus, while we can firmly establish that our three main sources belonged to the genre of courtly *majālis* literature, the borders of this genre are not necessarily easy to define. First, there are works with titles that point to the genre under discussion, although in fact these texts clearly fall within other types of literature, such as, for example, al-Thaʿlabī's *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, which, despite the first part of its title, clearly belongs to the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and not to the genre of courtly *majālis* works.[422] Likewise, Ismaʿili *majālis* works

416   Title translated according to Bergé, al-Tawḥīdī 114. On this work, see Bergé, al-Tawḥīdī 114, 117–8. The word-for-word quoted passage in al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir* v, 42–4, deals with the professions of the Prophet's Companions.

417   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 199ᵛ–200ʳ.

418   Irwin, Literature 9. See, however, the critical comments in Bauer, Literature 112–6. On the significance of the ʿAbbasid period for Arabic court literature, see Kilpatrick, Selection 337.

419   Irwin, Literature 9. See also Yılmaz, Books 510.

420   Irwin, Literature 9. See also Homerin, Reflections 65, 68, 70; Muhanna, *World* 72; and on the significance of ʿAbbasid genres for later courtly literature more broadly, see England, *Empires* 14.

421   See section 1.2.1 above.

422   On this work as part of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* genre, see section 4.2.4 below. Collections of sermons are also preserved under the title of *majālis*, which in this case refers to the meetings during which sermons were given. For examples of such texts, see Pourjavady, Genres 291–2; Shoshan, Sermons; al-Ḥaddādī, *ʿUyūn al-majālis*; al-Maqdisī, *Safīnat al-abrār*; and al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq*, on which, see section 4.2.4 below. On the broader social contexts of

based on the proceedings of teaching sessions form a separate genre, given their clearly distinct contents.[423] Christian Arabic texts that relate to the social context of premodern Islamicate *majālis* and deal with interreligious debates between members of the Christian clergy and Muslim dignitaries are so different in content that there is little risk of confusing them with courtly *majālis* texts.[424]

Still, we know of a considerable number of texts that do exhibit important features of courtly *majālis* works: they contain a broad array of types of entertaining and edifying material, they can be used to prepare oneself for participation in social events, and they demonstrate the intellectual achievements of their authors.[425] However, whether these works can be called "courtly" in the strict sense of this term, as outlined in the introduction of the present study, must be verified for each work individually. Based on the preceding discussion of examples of works from the genre of courtly *majālis* and the theoretical framework of the present study, we can suggest the following criteria for deciding whether or not a work should be called "courtly":[426]

(1)   Was the work produced by a member of a court society or in a courtly environment?

(2)   Was it written on behalf of, or as an offering to, a ruler or another high-ranking member of a court society?

(3)   Did its primary intended readership consist of members of a court society, or was it intended to be performed for such people?[427]

(4)   Were its contents based on courtly events or do they deal specifically with courtly topics?

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such texts, see Berkey, *Preaching*. On the related so-called *malfūẓāt* (lit. "utterances") genre of primarily Indian origin, see Nizami, Malfūẓāt 577–8; Nizami, *History* 163–97; Digby, Sufis v; Jackson, Khair 34–5, 40, 53; Faruqi, Preface and Introduction, in Dehlawī, *Discourses*, esp. viii, 57; Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 261–2; Kollatz, Creation 256–7; Kollatz, *Inspiration* 62–4.

423   On this type of text, see, e.g., Halm, Oath 103, 107, 110–1; Halm, *Learning* 29, 46, 48, 56, 86, 90–1; Hamdani, History 239, 242; Hamdani, The *Kitāb al-Majālis*; al-Nuʿmān, *Majālis*. On the differences between these works and other Ismaʿili *majālis* texts, see Hamdani, The *Kitāb al-Majālis* 267; Taherali, Kitab.

424   On this genre, see Griffith, Monk.

425   For works that could turn out to be "courtly" in the stricter sense of this term, see, e.g., Ali, *Salons* 18–9, 27.

426   This list builds on and extends the criteria in Kilpatrick, Selection 338. For a similar understanding of "court literature," see Flemming, Activities 253; and for somewhat different approaches, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 270–2; Naaman, *Literature* 132–55; England, *Empires*, passim.

427   On the performativity of court literature, see Vitz and Pomerantz, Epilogue 243.

(5) Were its main dramatis personae members of a court society?
(6) Did the work contribute to courtly communicative projects such as, for example, the representation and legitimation of rule, the construction and stabilization of courtly relationships of patronage and interaction, the assertion of supremacy over domestic and foreign elites, or the development and affirmation of shared courtly worldviews, systems of meaning, and social realities?[428]

If we try to understand the wider intellectual context of courtly *majālis* literature, we must consider the multifaceted term *adab*, which might best be translated to the German word *Bildung*.[429] While we cannot review the extensive existing literature on *adab* in detail here,[430] Julia Bray's definition of the concept may serve as a useful introduction:

> *Adab* is an Arabic term (pl. *ādāb* [...]) for a key concept of medieval Islamic culture. In the culture's self-description, *adab* is both polite learning and its uses: the improvement of one's understanding by instruction and experience, it results in civility and becomes a means of achieving social goals. *Adab* requires a knowledge of history, poetry, ideas, proverbs, parallels, precedents, and the correct and pleasing use of language. It is the social and intellectual currency of the elite and those who aspire to be part of it. Courtiers and politicians should use *adab* in their dealings with the ruler. Rulers and grandees should be patrons of learning and *adab*. *Adab* can be displayed to them as a product (the treatise or compendium); as a performance (the disputation or reading); or simply the apt repartee in the *majlis* (salon, social gathering [...]).[431]

One of the most important advantages of this definition is the way it highlights the close connection between *adab* and the courtly sphere. Indeed, some authors view *adab* as the Arabic equivalent of "courtliness"[432] and suggest that

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428 This last point is partly based on England, *Empires* 2, 11.
429 Cf. for this translation, e.g., Fähndrich, Begriff 326; Lichtenstädter, Conception 34; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 298; Heinrichs, Einführung 17.
430 Classical studies include Lichtenstädter, Conception; Nallino, *Littérature*, esp. 7–34. More recent works include, e.g., Bonebakker, Adab; Fähndrich, Begriff; Gabrieli, Adab; Pellat, Adab; Lapidus, Knowledge; Bauer, Adab; Hämeen-Anttila, Adab; Enderwitz, Adab; Günther, Education, General.
431 Bray, Adab 13 (transliteration and use of italics modified). On *adab* and salons, see also Sadan, Brewer 1–2, 4; Fähndrich, Begriff 335; von Grunebaum, Aspects 292; Orfali, *Art* 3.
432 Geary et al., Courtly Cultures 191–2.

"*adab* refers to courtly manners and tastes to be conditioned and exhibited."[433] The practitioner of *adab*, the *adīb*, who has "the political and ethical knowledge to survive and succeed at court,"[434] is thus seen as a particularly qualified companion of a ruler.[435] While it would be an overstatement to limit the social context of this multifaceted concept to the courtly sphere, it is clear that *adab* played a special role in the cultural life of premodern Islamicate courts.[436]

Originally, the Arabic word *adab* was largely synonymous with *sunna*, with both terms sharing "the sense of 'habit, hereditary norm of conduct, custom' derived from ancestors and other persons who are looked up to as models."[437] *Sunna* later acquired the more restricted meaning of "practice of the Prophet Muḥammad," whereas the semantic field of *adab* expanded considerably and adopted a moral ethical, an intellectual, and a professional dimension.[438] In its moral ethical meaning, it denotes "the rules [...] that determine the practical morals of a human being"[439] that are acquired through a process of moral and ethical education.[440]

The second, intellectual dimension points to the ways, skills, and knowledge a person must attain through general education in order to become a fully cultivated human being, an *adīb*.[441] This knowledge is largely of a literary and philological nature, a fact that supports the equation of *adab* with "literary scholarship," "literary culture," or "the ability to entertain others with 'aphorisms, anecdotes, elegant verse and stories.'"[442] This close association between

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433   Ali, *Salons* 33.

434   Drews, Emergence 52. See also Drews, Emergence 53.

435   Heinrichs, Einführung 25.

436   On this point see also, e.g., Sadan, Brewer 3–4; Pellat, Adab 440; Makdisi, *Humanism* 66, 92; Allen, Period 18; Sanders, *Ritual* 14–5; Yıldız, Literature 198, 235; Lapidus, Knowledge 38; Pomerantz, Error 143–4; Muhanna, *World* 39; El Cheikh, Conversation 94–5; Flatt, *Courts* 34–5.

437   Gabrieli, Adab 175. On the original meaning and etymology of *adab*, see also Fähndrich, Begriff 331; Lichtenstädter, Conception 34; Pellar, Adab 439; Lapidus, Knowledge 38; and the critical remarks in Bonebakker, Adab 17–9.

438   Fähndrich, Begriff 331. See also Bonebakker, Adab 17.

439   Fähndrich, Begriff 331.

440   Fähndrich, Begriff 331. On the ethical dimension, see Bonebakker, Adab 18–9; Gabrieli, Adab 175. On the acquisition of *adab* through education and the use of anecdotes in this process, see esp. Lichtenstädter, Conception 34–5. On *adab* and education, see also section 4.5 below; Günther, Poetics 17; Pellat, Adab 441; Khalidi, *Thought* 83; Günther, Education, General.

441   Fähndrich, Begriff 331.

442   Bonebakker, Adab 16 (first two direct quotations), 23 (third quotation, here Bonebakker is quoting, partially, Nallino, *Littérature*). Bonebakker suggests that this meaning of *adab* paved the way for the rather restricted meaning of belles-lettres that the term acquired in

adab and literary knowledge has been the focus of significant attention in scholarship.[443] Yet, we must not forget that the concept of *adab* also includes erudition in other fields of intellectual activity, such as linguistics and grammar, history,[444] Quran and *ḥadīth* studies, medicine, mathematics, economics, astronomy, and philosophy.[445] Indeed, some authors go so far as to contrast *adab*, which can denote a broad knowledge of various disciplines, with the term *ʿilm*, which is sometimes taken to mean advanced learning in a particular field of knowledge.[446] While this contrastive understanding of the two terms is not without problems,[447] it makes clear that those who possess *adab* in the intellectual sense distinguish themselves by the broad horizon of their knowledge.

Third, *adab* denotes the corpus of knowledge that members of specific professions need to master.[448] In this sense—which speaks against an understanding of *ʿilm* and *adab* as "a simple relation of the general to the particular"[449]—*adab* appears in constructions such as *adab al-kātib*, *adab al-qāḍī*, *adab al-muḥaddith*, or *adab al-wazīr*, which are umbrella terms for the necessary knowledge of a secretary, judge, *ḥadīth* transmitter, or vizier, respectively.[450]

In today's scholarly parlance, *adab* sometimes refers to a broad array of various types of premodern Arabic literature. The problem behind this common usage of the label "*adab* literature" is that it is so all-encompassing that it serves "as a catch-all to denote any work [...] or literary form [...] that is both instruct-

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modern Arabic, cf. Bonebakker, Adab 16; see also Gabrieli, Adab 176; Sadan, Brewer 1–2. On anecdotes and *adab*, see Rosenthal, *Humor* 3, 6; Sadan, Brewer 3–4; Pellat, Adab 440; Spies, Erzählstoffe 686; and on aphorisms and *adab*, see Berger, Aphorism; Fähndrich, Begriff 332; Gutas, Wisdom 59–60, 67.

443   See, e.g., Bonebakker, Adab 19–24; Gabrieli, Adab 175–6.

444   On *adab* and history, see also, e.g., Ali, *Salons* 35–7, 58, 65; Makdisi, *Humanism* 163–70; Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 60–1; Leder, Use 126–7; Toral-Niehoff, History, esp. 62–3, 80; Hämeen-Anttila, Adab; Khalidi, *Thought* 83–130; Weintritt, *Formen*, esp. 203; Haarmann, *Quellenstudien* 160–2; Robinson, *Historiography* 116–8.

445   Cf. Gabrieli, Adab 175–6; Behzadi, Intellektuelle 298.

446   Bonebakker, Adab 24.

447   See Bonebakker, Adab 24. On *ʿilm* and *adab*, see also, e.g., Bonebakker, Adab 26–7; Fähndrich, Begriff 331; Fähndrich, Approach 439; Freimark, *Vorwort* 11; van Gelder, Compleat 244–5; Enderwitz, Adab; Hämeen-Anttila, Adab; Lapidus, Knowledge 39–40; al-Musawi, *Republic* 181–2.

448   Fähndrich, Begriff 331.

449   Bonebakker, Adab 24.

450   Scheiner, Class 185, 196–9 (on *adab al-muḥaddith*); Bonebakker, Adab 25 (on the remaining types). On this kind of literature and its subtypes, see also Gabrieli, Adab 176; Pellat, Adab 443; Hämeen-Anttila, Adab; van Berkel, Reconstructing 10.

ive and pleasurable."[451] Given that the aspiration to entertain and edify was very widespread in premodern Arabic literature and is discernible also, for example, in works of Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*),[452] this usage of the term "*adab* literature," which is not backed by premodern Arabic terminological conventions, risks losing its analytical value by being applied to a huge number of premodern Arabic literary texts,[453] including the main sources of the present study. Therefore, it is advisable to limit its usage to more narrowly defined types of writings. As Seeger A. Bonebakker argues, the label "*adab* literature," when understood as pertaining to a particular genre of Arabic literature, should only be applied to works that contain "'the literary scholarship of a cultivated man,' presented in systematic form."[454] Against the backdrop of this more precise definition, our three main sources, while certainly connected to the concept of *adab* more broadly,[455] do not fall within the category of *adab* literature, given that their inner structure is not outwardly systematic and they only focus on literary themes in a limited way. Still, the works deal with questions of *adab* in the wider sense as outlined, for example, in Bray's definition cited above. Therefore, our main sources are in line with the concept of *adab* as a particular way at looking at the world and behaving in it,[456] but these texts are not part of the genre of *adab* literature in a narrower sense.[457]

An examination of how our main sources employ the term *adab* corroborates this view. Here, *adab* appears primarily in the moral sense of "refined and proper social behavior." Thus, returning a greeting in an inappropriate manner is "neglecting [one's] *adab*,"[458] just as misbehaving in a ruler's *majlis* shows "a

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451 Bray, Adab 14. See also the related observations in Bonebakker, Adab 27. For works subscribing to this broad understanding of "*adab* literature," see, e.g., Gabrieli, Adab 176; Lichtenstädter, Conception 33; Pellat, Adab 440–4; Fähndrich, Begriff 332–8. On the popularity of this type of literature in the Islamicate middle period, see Hirschler, *Word* 147–51.

452 Saleh, *Formation* 99, 140.

453 Bonebakker, Adab 27–30.

454 Bonebakker, Adab 30.

455 On texts that are not works of *adab*, but are "related to *adab* through their content and didactic character" (Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature 19), see also Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature 19–20.

456 On *adab* as a "Denkform" (way of thinking), see Fähndrich, Begriff 329; as an "art de vivre" (way of life) see Gardet, Société 268; and as a "discursive tradition," see Yıldız, Literature 198.

457 Even George Makdisi, who strongly emphasized the importance of *adab* for Islamicate cultural history, spoke of *majālis* texts as only "serv[ing] the needs of *adab* studies" (Makdisi, *Humanism* 167, see also 326), and not as part of *adab* literature itself.

458 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 70.

lack of *adab*."[459] Moreover, wearing the right stately clothes is a sign of the good manners (*ādāb*) of a ruler.[460]

Yet, *adab* also appears in the texts in the sense of the type of education that makes one a cultivated human being. Sultan al-Ghawrī is credited with the statement "There is nothing in the world that is better than *adab*. *Adab* is a jewel and the intellect (*ʿaql*) is its place of origin (lit. its mine)."[461] Similarly, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* al-Sharīf attributes the aphorism "A person's honor lies in his knowledge (*ʿilm*) and his *adab*, and not in his origin (*aṣl*) and his lineage (*nasab*)" to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[462] Thus, while *adab* appears in our sources in two of three main dimensions of the semantic field outlined here, the texts do not refer to themselves as *adab* works, nor is this term used to denote a specific type of literature.[463] Calling our main sources "*adab* works" without further qualifications would therefore be anachronistic at best.

While they clearly belong to the genre of courtly *majālis* works, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* share features with other types of Arabic literature that are relevant to our understanding of the late Mamluk literary context of our main sources.[464] Encyclopedias and anthologies flourished during Mamluk times and can be seen as literary hallmarks of this period.[465] Like the works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, Mamluk anthologies and encyclopedias exhibit a very broad thematic horizon as they bring together literary and scholarly material from various disciplines and social backgrounds,[466] thereby relying on earlier works.[467] Their writers thus

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459   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 252; (ed. ʿAzzām) 129.

460   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 231.

461   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 157; (ed. ʿAzzām) 59. See also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4.

462   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 199; (ed. ʿAzzām) 84. See also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134.

463   On *adab* in the three texts, see also Mauder, Read.

464   For an analysis that situates the work in contemporaneous writings about the past, see Mauder, Read.

465   Bauer, Anthologien 71; Bauer, Literature 122; Muhanna, Century 343; Muhanna, *World* 1–2; van Ess, Activities 4; van Berkel, Opening 357, 362. On similarities and differences between these genres, see, e.g., Bauer, Anthologien 108; Hirschler, *Word* 188–90; Muhanna, Encyclopaedias; Muhanna, *World* 3, 43, 49, 51–2; Muhanna, Century 347; Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 252–3; Orfali, *Art* 13–4. On earlier anthologies, see, e.g., Orfali, *Art* 1–33; and on the genre in general, see Talib, *Epigram* 71–156.

466   On the contents of Mamluk anthologies, see, e.g., Bauer, Anthologien 74–6, 102–3; Hirschler, *Word* 188–92; and for encyclopedias, see, e.g., Muhanna, Encyclopaedias; Kilpatrick, Genre 34–5, 37–9; Herzog, Milieus 67–71; Muhanna, *World* 1, 32–3; van Berkel, Opening 357.

467   Bauer, Anthologien 76. See also Bauer, Anthologien 76–8, 84–5, 87–8, 90–3, 97–8, 102–4; Bauer, Literature 122.

demonstrated—like the authors of our *majālis* texts—that they possessed the competence expected from an *adīb*.[468] Hence, they not only sought to edify and entertain at the same time,[469] but also strived to show their expertise in the literary art of collecting and selecting material.[470]

In light of these similarities, Mamluk-era readers of the texts on al-Ghawrī's salons might well have had the impression that they were reading an anthology[471]—or, less probably, an encyclopedia. Yet, there are also considerable differences between our three main sources and anthologies and encyclopedias. First, unlike the typically very systematic structure of Mamluk anthologies and encyclopedias, the arrangement of our main sources is based largely on associative criteria.[472]

Second, the claims of the authors of our main sources about the origin of their contents do not match those of authors of Mamluk encyclopedias and anthologies, who usually acknowledge, quite openly, that their works are based on earlier written sources.[473]

Third, the courtly social context of the works, their authors, their main protagonists, and their intended readers are so atypical for Mamluk anthologies and encyclopedias that it again seems very far-fetched to group our main sources in this genre. As Thomas Bauer makes clear, Mamluk anthologies were typically not characterized by courtly contexts, indeed, they often had more or less "bourgeois"[474] origins and intended readerships.[475] Maike van Berkel suggests that Bauer's findings also apply, mutatis mutandis, to the readership of Mamluk encyclopedias.[476]

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468   Bauer, Anthologien 72, 85–6, 94; Bauer, Literature 122.

469   Bauer, Anthologien 76–7.

470   Bauer, Anthologien 85–6, 107–8.

471   I thank Thomas Bauer (Münster) for sharing this observation with me.

472   Bauer, Anthologien 76, 79 (for anthologies), 108 (for encyclopedias); Muhanna, Encyclopaedias; Herzog, Milieus 66–7; Kilpatrick, Genre 34–5 (last three for encyclopedias). See also Werkmeister, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 9, 28–9; Muhanna, *World* 30–3; von Hees, Encyclopaedia 174; von Hees, *Enzyklopädie* 111; van Berkel, Opening 357.

473   Bauer, Anthologien 107 (for anthologies); Muhanna, Encyclopaedias (for encyclopedias). See also Muhanna, *World* 5, 42, 65; von Hees, Encyclopaedia 177–9; and on the connection between anthologies and *majālis*, see Orfali, *Art* 17, 20, 139, 186–7.

474   Bauer, Anthologien 104, speaks about the outlook of one of the anthologies he discusses as "kleinbürgerlich" (petty bourgeois). Similarly, Herzog, Milieus 66, associates Mamluk encyclopedias to "the new rising class of semi-instructed bourgeoisie."

475   Bauer, Anthologien 80, 83–4. See also Hirschler, *Word* 186–8.

476   Van Berkel, Opening 373–4. On encyclopedias in European courtly contexts, see van den Abeele, Encyclopédies. Their structure, the origin of the material, and social background also set our main sources apart from the genre of *muḥāḍara* literature, on which see al-

Our main sources share their courtly character with another type of Arabic literature that blossomed under the Mamluks: the literary offering. In an article discussing seven works of this genre, Peter M. Holt shows that all the Mamluk specimens of this type were dedicated to specific, clearly identified rulers and, in at least in one case, the dedicatee received a copy for his library. Their contents focused on the dedicatee's biography and highlighted his origin, personal qualities (*manāqib*), military victories, and political successes, sometimes paying special attention to the miraculous qualities attributed to the letters of his name or numbers associated with him. In general, the works served to legitimate the dedicatee's rule and were written shortly after the latter's ascension to office. Their authors were usually clients of the dedicatees or those who strived to establish a patronage relationship with them.[477]

Holt distinguishes between three groups of virtues (*manāqib*) typically attributed to rulers in this type of literature: First, "primitive virtues" associated with the ancient Arabian concept of manliness (*muruwwa*), including "courage, loyalty to the kin, and its complement the obligation of blood-revenge, generosity and hospitality." Second, "virtues […] which distinguish a true and devout Muslim: the performance of religious duties, obedience to the Holy Law and deference to its teachers and practitioners, and above all […] devotion to the Holy War for the defence of Islam." Third, "royal virtues: the exercise of justice by the redress of wrongs, the maintenance of the Holy Law, magnanimity and readiness to pardon, attention to public (especially religious) work." As Holt points out, "these three kinds of qualities recur under one name or another"[478] in all works typical for the genre.

It is clear that our main sources share many common elements with the genre of literary offerings, as likewise they were written for a ruler and bear witness to their author's intentions to praise the ruling sultan and secure his patronage. Thus, their social background and the authorial intentions behind their production link our main sources to the genre of literary offerings.

There are, however, significant differences in how this social background and the named authorial intentions manifest themselves. Literary offerings

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Jubūrī, Muqaddima, in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muḥāḍarāt* 18–22; Fākhūrī, Muqaddima, in al-Amāsī, *Rawḍ al-akhyār* 8–9.

477 Cf. for the entire paragraph Holt, Offerings 3–16. See also Holt, Biographies, esp. 19–22, 24, 27; Veselý, Sultansbiographie, esp. 271, 274–5; Veselý, Lebensgeschichte, esp. 152–3, 157–66; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 21–7; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 42–3; Troadec, Baybars 116–7; Lewicka, King 6–8; Barancewicz-Lewicka, True 87; Weintritt, *Formen* 183–6, 201–2; D'hulster, Caught, esp. 183, 190–216; van Steenbergen, Discourse, esp. 7–8, 12–4, 18–9.

478 Holt, Ruler 28 (all direct quotations in this paragraph). See also Holt, Biographies 23; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 22–3.

usually center on a ruler's biography and use it as a framework to attribute to him a largely standardized set of virtues. The situation is clearly different in our sources: The sultan's biography is not their primary focus, nor do they pay much attention to the sultan's virtues. As far as they do engage with the sultan's *manāqib*, they do so primarily in their introductions in a summary fashion, as is typical for most Arabic works dedicated to a patron, irrespective of their genre.[479] In the main parts of the works, the virtues of the sultan that are, at least implicitly, highlighted are his knowledge and wisdom— qualities conspicuously absent from Holt's list. Furthermore, to a considerable degree, the contents of our sources do not deal with the sultan at all, but rather focus on the proceedings of his *majālis*. The central focus of the works is not a person, as would be typical for a literary offering, but a series of events. Furthermore, because of the broad thematic scope of the discussions in the *majālis, Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in particular include material from various scholarly disciplines, whereas literary offerings deal primarily with biographical and historical material. Moreover, none of our sources indulge in reflections on the special qualities of their dedicatee's name or on specific numbers associated with him. Finally, unlike the typical literary offering, none of our main sources was produced shortly after the sultan's ascension to office.

Given the many differences, we must conclude that none of our main sources falls clearly in the genre of literary offerings. However, the second volume of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* deals, to a considerable degree, with the biography of Sultan al-Ghawrī, discussing his origin, his early career, his rise to the highest echelons of the Mamluk military, and finally his takeover of the sultanate; thereby it recurrently points to the sultan's special qualities. Thus, this section of the works comes very close to the typical contents of literary offerings. But *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* also contains plenty of historical, literary, and religious material that lacks a direct connection to the sultan, apart from being transmitted in the ruler's *majlis*. Therefore, the remaining contents of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* make it impossible to consider the work a literary offering.[480]

The so-called *munāẓara* (lit. "disputation") literature exhibits close structural parallels to the accounts of the discussions held in the sultan's *majlis* that make up a significant part of our main sources. Texts belonging to this genre

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479 Freimark, *Vorwort* 65, see also 89.

480 Moreover, its focus on historical matters connects *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* to the tradition of historiographical writing. However, the text is notably different from the dominant types of Mamluk historiographical literature. Furthermore, history constitutes only one of the topics of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.

can be of two kinds: The first type recounts fictive discussions "in which two or more living or inanimate beings appear talking and competing for the honour [of] which of them possesses the best qualities."[481] Typical conflicting parties that appear in such texts include such pairs as a rose and narcissus, spring and fall, or pen and sword.[482]

The second type of *munāẓara* texts claim to be accounts of actual discussions about theological, legal, and other issues, often taking place between adherents of different religions, intra-religious groups or schools.[483] Rulers or other high-ranking figures appear regularly as arbiters in such debates.[484] Often, texts of this kind fulfill both entertaining and didactic functions and consist of chains of questions and answers, a characteristic that is expressed in their alternative designation as *masāʾil wa-ajwiba* (questions and answers).[485]

This second type of *munāẓara* literature exhibits striking structural similarities with our three main sources: like *munāẓara* works, the texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* are heavily shaped by the question-and-answer technique which by Mamluk times had become a time-honored key method of Islamicate scholarship. Yet, since this method "strongly influenced, both in form and content, numerous Arabic writings in virtually all fields of knowledge,"[486] it comes as no surprise that it also appears in the texts on the sultan's courtly *majālis*.

Moreover, at least two points speak strongly against considering our main sources part of the *munāẓara* genre. First, the question-and-answer sections make up only one part—albeit a substantial one—of the contents of our works, as they consist also of anecdotes, jokes, riddles, aphorisms, prayers, and other textual elements. Labeling the texts as *munāẓara* works would mean neglecting these parts of the works and thus convey a severely distorted image of their structure and contents. Second, the ruler to which the works are dedicated appears in them not as an arbiter, as is typical for *munāẓara* works, but as a directly involved participant in the disputations recounted, someone whose opinions could be contradicted or corrected by other people involved.[487]

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481   Wagner, Munāẓara 566.
482   Wagner, Munāẓara 566–7. See also Mattock, Tradition; Heinrichs, Rose; Wagner, *Rangstreitdichtung*; Hämeen-Anttila, Essay 141–4.
483   Wagner, Munāẓara 565.
484   Wagner, Munāẓara 565–6.
485   Wagner, Munāẓara 565–6. See also Griffith, Monk 63; Daiber, Masāʾil wa-Adjwiba 636–8; Hämeen-Anttila, Essay 138–9; van Ess, Disputationspraxis 26–31; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiv, 240.
486   Daiber, Masāʾil wa-Adjwiba 636.
487   See section 3.1.5 below.

A final genre we must mention here is that of the *maqāma* (lit. "standing, station"), which A.F.L. Beeston describes as follows: "Its basic characteristics are that it is fictional, and presented through the mouth of a fictional narrator; it is episodic in structure, and anecdotal in substance [...]; and it is stylistically drafted mainly in *sajʿ*."[488] Among the points linking the *maqāma* to courtly *majālis* works, we note the centrality of anecdotes, the presence of a narrator, and the semantic relationship between their respective appellations.[489]

At the same time, there are also clear differences between the two types of literature: First, *maqāma*s belong to one of the few types of premodern Arabic literature that is clearly intended and understood as fictional.[490] Moreover, *majālis* texts typically incorporate a broader array of types of material than the anecdote-centered *maqāma*. Finally, *majālis* works feature *sajʿ* to a much more limited degree than *maqāma*s.

Thus, we can conclude that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* share elements with various genres of Arabic literature, some of which are typical for the Mamluk period. In combining elements from these genres, our main sources bear witness to how much they are embedded in the Arabic literary culture of the late middle period. Yet, we also saw that the genre of courtly *majālis* works is best suited to explain the peculiarities of our texts and to grasp the specific acts of communication that stand behind their composition. We now turn to the questions of how these works relate to the acts of communication in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and whether and in what way we can use them in our historical study of the sultan's court.

3.1.5   *The Value of the Texts as Historical Sources*

All three of our main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* claim to be eyewitness accounts of these events. Yet, as we have seen, the texts are not simply recordings of the acts of communication that took place in the sultan's presence, they are also notably shaped by a second set of communicative contexts, namely those between their authors and readers. As literary texts, they are subject to aesthetic standards and genre conventions and their writers produced them with a specific set of mutually interconnected intentions in mind. Among these, praise of the sultan, the legitimation of his rule, and aspirations to secure relations of benefit and protective patronage with him loom large. Without

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488   Beeston, al-Hamadhānī 135. See also Stewart, Maqāma; Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*.

489   According to Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 65, a *majlis* is generally "formally organized," whereas a *maqāma* has a less structured and more "haphazard" character.

490   Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 151.

doubt, these authorial intentions shaped the content and form of the works. Among other things, these writers did their best to present Sultan al-Ghawrī in a favorable light, while at the same time highlighting their skills and achievements.

Hence, it is impossible to read the three texts in a positivistic manner as "neutral" or "objective" recordings of what "actually" took place in the sultan's *majālis*. Rather, when using these works as sources about their extra-textual context, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with literary texts.[491] Still, this observation holds true for almost all written sources from the late Mamluk period, including chronicles such as Ibn Iyās' work.[492] As we saw,[493] this work is also strongly influenced by its writer's personality and the social and historical context of its composition—an observation that most previous studies on al-Ghawrī's time did not take into account, or at least not to a sufficient extent.[494]

But can we use *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* at all as historical sources on late Mamluk court culture? Or should we see these texts solely as literary curiosities that are so influenced by their author's aims and intentions that they are not suitable to provide for a better understanding of the intellectual, religious, and political life at al-Ghawrī's court?

There are five categories of arguments indicating that these texts constitute valuable historical sources on al-Ghawrī's court: (1) their history of interpretation; (2) their genre and communicative functions; (3) internal evidence from individual texts; (4) evidence from comparisons between the texts; and (5) external historical and scientific evidence.

(1) Thus far, the scholars who have studied or referred to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* have, without a single exception, considered them valuable sources on court life under al-Ghawrī.[495] These scholars include leading experts on Mamluk cultural history such as, Barbara Flemming, Ulrich Haarmann,[496] Jonathan Berkey, Doris Behrens-Abouseif,[497] Stephan Coner-

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491   On literary works as sources of court history, see Hirschbiegel, Überzeitlichkeit 19.
492   On the literary character of late Mamluk chronicles, see e.g., Wollina, *Alltag* 30–1; and on the use of premodern Arabic chronicles as historical sources more broadly, see Marmer, *Culture* 8; van Berkel et al., Conclusion 215–6.
493   See section 2.1.1 above.
494   See section 2.2.1 above.
495   *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is not relevant here, as this text has been almost completely neglected thus far.
496   Haarmann, Miṣr 175.
497   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 77.

mann,[498] Robert Irwin, and Yehoshua Frenkel.[499] Yet, adducing this observation as the first argument should not be misinterpreted as an attempt to solve the question of the historical value of the sources through reference to the scholarly consensus. Rather, it points to these scholars' observations and reflections on whether we can use *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to elucidate a particular chapter of Mamluk history. The work of Flemming, Berkey, and Irwin deserves particular attention here.

Barbara Flemming described *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as "records" or "transactions" of the sultan's salons produced by an "insider"[500] that provide information on the biographies of the *majālis* participants,[501] al-Ghawrī's language skills, and artistic interests,[502] as well as the time, place, etiquette, and topics of the salons.[503] Throughout her studies, Flemming did not question the reliability of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, but understood the text as a faithful account of the cultural life of al-Ghawrī's court.

Jonathan Berkey advocated a more critical reading of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which he characterized as "fascinating documents" that "well repay rereading."[504] Yet, he also noted that "a high degree of flattery is present in each"[505] and called for their careful analysis, cautioning against "accept[ing] uncritically their generous appraisal of al-Ghawrī's intellectual abilities."[506] Nevertheless, he relied heavily on these texts in his reconstruction of religious scholarship in the late Mamluk courtly sphere and noted that "[t]he accounts may exaggerate the sultan's wit, but he consistently emerges from them as one who took an active and aggressive role in the discussions."[507] He thereby pointed to the remarkable consistency of our main sources in their representation of the sultan's *majālis*, to which we return below.

In his attempt to use these sources for a study of al-Ghawrī's political thought, Robert Irwin tackled the question of the reliability of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in more detail than the scholars before him. After accepting most of what the sources say about the proceedings of the salons and al-Ghawrī's intellectual abilities, Irwin noted:

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498   Conermann, Es boomt 50–1.
499   Frenkel, *Culture* 11; Frenkel, Nations 63, 68–9.
500   Flemming, Activities 251 (all three quotations). See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24–6.
501   Flemming, Perser 84. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24.
502   Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22.
503   Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24–6.
504   Berkey, Mamluks 170.
505   Berkey, Mamluks 172.
506   Berkey, Mamluks 172–3.
507   Berkey, Mamluks 173.

> [The sources contain] an idealized account of what went on at the soirees. Doubtless the questions that were unanswerable, the ums and ers, as well as examples of the sultan's stark ignorance and ugly spats between competitive courtiers, were erased from the record. The aim of both treatises was to glorify Qānṣūh.[508]

To Irwin, the texts were thus a "record" of what took place in the sultan's *majlis*, albeit not a neutral one. Although serving the sultan's "self-representation,"[509] in Irwin's view this function only influenced their contents to a moderate degree: While the texts may pass in silence over occurrences shedding a negative light on the sultan and his court society, what they do report actually took place in the sultan's court. To Irwin, *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* may convey an incomplete, but not a falsified image of the sultan's *majālis*.

To sum up, the authors who have, thus far, dealt with texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* considered them informative sources on late Mamluk court life, with Berkey's and Irwin's work representing the most critical approaches. While the former highlighted the need to critically review what the texts say about al-Ghawrī's intellectual merits, the latter pointed out that the texts have "blind spots" in terms of material that could reflect negatively on the sultan and his circle.

(2) The genre of the texts and their communicative functions likewise speak in favor of their historical reliability. As seen above, our main sources were written with intentions that do not necessarily fit the claim that they describe things "as they actually happened." However, in order to fulfill their functions—such as, for example, praising the ruler, contributing to the legitimation of his reign, advertising their authors' skills, and securing patronage for them—the texts also had to convince their readers that the contents were not grossly counterfactual. If the texts had presented the sultan as an active participant in the scholarly discussions of the *majālis* while he was in fact an unlettered ignoramus who despised academic disputes, then their intended readers, who came primarily from the sultan's court society, would have been aware of the discrepancy between their portrayal of al-Ghawrī and the extra-textual events. Rather, the texts would even have highlighted the sultan's intellectual shortcomings and satirized his deficiencies. Moreover, if the authors' attempts to highlight their own contributions to the scholarly debates of the *majālis* had been totally

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508   Irwin, Thinking 49.
509   Irwin, Thinking 49.

unfounded, they might have jeopardized their aspirations for client status, and also provoked the sultan's anger. Hence, the communicative functions of the texts strongly suggest that their contents did not stand in clear contrast to their authors' experiences in the sultan's salons. While this does not rule out the possibility that the authors produced images of the *majālis* that suited their goals and intentions, the fact remains that their readers, who to a significant degree had participated in the salons, would not expect the texts to clearly contradict what they had experienced during these events.[510]

This observation fits in neatly with what we know about the genre of Arabic courtly *majālis* literature. Unlike other genres in premodern Arabic literature, such as the related literary form of the *maqāma*, *majālis* works are renowned for their non-fictitious character.[511] Moreover, if we keep in mind that, as Stefan Leder noted, "fictional literature is not only constituted by the existence of fictive contents, but requires a system of textual and extra textual signs pointing to its fictional character,"[512] then it is clear that our *majālis* texts fall outside the category of fiction, since they lack any signs that would indicate to their readers that they are dealing with a fictional text.[513]

If the label "fictional" is not applicable to our sources, what other categories might describe the particular character of the texts? In his study "Fictional Narration and Imagination within an Authoritative Framework" (1998), Sebastian Günther employs the category of "narrativity"[514] to differentiate between texts that "record" or "report" and others that "narrate."[515] This process of narration does not necessarily entail the production of a fictional text. Rather, texts can be described as "non-fictional but nevertheless narrative," as for example, in the case of many historiographical works.[516]

As we saw, our main sources also do not merely record the events on which they are based, but rather employ literary means and rhetorical devices to nar-

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510   For a related argument, see Dennis, Panegyric 137.

511   Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 151.

512   Leder, Conventions 35. See also Leder, Conventions 43–5, 59–60; Leder, Use 125; and for a critical appraisal of Leder's work, Meisami, History, esp. 17–8; Meisami, Reign, esp. 149–52.

513   On fictitious elements and fictional texts in Arabic literature, see Leder, Conventions, esp. 36; and on potential theoretical pitfalls, see Toral-Niehoff, Fact 63. On the question of fiction in premodern Islamicate literature, see also Toral-Niehoff, Fact; Herzog, Eyes 25–31; and for texts similar to our sources, see Behzadi, Introduction 13; Behzadi, Guidance 218–9, 232.

514   Günther, Fictional Narration 436.

515   Günther, Fictional Narration 433.

516   Günther, Fictional Narration 436. See also Günther, Modern Literary Theory 28–9; Herzog, Eyes 26, 30–1.

rate them in a way that suits their authors' intentions and allows them to convey those messages that they sought to communicate to their readers. As Julie Scott Meisami writes with regard to historiographical literature:

> [N]one of our authors set out to write "fiction" […]; nor would their audiences have received their accounts as such. For one thing, the events depicted were […] already known to their audiences, but their meaning was geared both to contemporary and general concerns. The fact of "telling" [i.e., narrating] them is part and parcel of the historian's task. It is the purpose, and hence the manner of their telling that is important for our historians and for their audiences. Were these accounts not "true," the purpose behind their telling would, arguably, be lost; but were they not told in the most effective manner, their meaning—and their message— might not be clearly grasped.[517]

Mutatis mutandis, the same could be said about our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: If their authors had written something that was blatantly "untrue," it is quite likely that they would have failed in their communicative enterprise, especially given the background knowledge of their readership. However, in order to make sure that the texts fulfilled their functions, their authors not only reported what they had seen and heard, but did so using devices typical for the narrative mode of literary communication. Thus, we can categorize our main sources as non-fictional narrative texts.[518]

Seeing our sources not as neutral "records," but rather as the results of processes of narration and literary composition fully aligns with the image the texts present of themselves. The introductions of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* state that the texts include only a fraction of what was said and done in the sultan's *majlis*,[519] thereby making clear from the outset that they are products of processes of authorial selection and composition, as is typical for narrative texts. Moreover, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* refers, as we saw, to a process of revision (*taṣḥīḥ*) in the context of the production of his work,[520] again showing that he viewed his work not just as "records," but as the

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517   Meisami, History 29–30. On the usage of literary means and rhetorical devices in the Islamicate historiographical tradition, see, e.g., Toral-Niehoff, Fact 66–7; Meisami, History 15; Meisami, Reign 152, 168–70; Hirschler, *Historiography* 3–6, 122–3; Conermann, *Historiographie*, esp. 13–6, 271–4, 427–31, 437–8; Trausch, *Formen*, esp. 18–20; Shoshan, *Poetics*, esp. x, xxii–xxiv.

518   My understanding of "narrative texts" is based on Weber, *Erzählliteratur*.

519   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.

520   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 50ʳ.

result of his literary efforts. Finally, we may also point to al-Sharīf's reference to himself as "the one who composed (*muḥarrir*) this book,"[521] thus pointing to his involvement in compiling, selecting, arranging, formulating, and editing its contents.

As non-fictional narrative texts, we can make use of our sources for the study of their origin context just as historians usually do with historiographical texts, provided we keep in mind their particularities as courtly *majālis* texts. It is a well-established fact that it is possible to rely on narrative texts of this genre to study aspects of cultural, religious, intellectual, and political history. This is especially clear from the role that one of the most prominent specimens of this genre—al-Tawḥīdī's *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*—continues to play in the context of research on the Buyid period. On this text, Lale Behzadi notes:

> [W]e can use al-Tawḥīdī's work as a source of information about the con-
> ditions he lived in [and] the political situation of that period. […] [H]is
> work provides us (as well as his contemporary readers) with information
> about several fields of knowledge, especially philosophy, theology, rhet-
> oric and behavior in general.[522]

Similarly, Joel L. Kraemer states: "Read with circumspection, Tawḥīdī's accounts […] are reliable and authoritative."[523] Given that *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa* belongs to the same genre as our main sources and that its author had a comparable social background and fulfills very similar communicative functions, it stands to reason that our main sources can serve a similar role in the historical analysis of Mamluk court culture.

(3) As a further point that speaks strongly in favor of the reliability of our main sources, we note that they contain material that stands in clear opposition to their authors' intentions to present al-Ghawrī and their role in his salons in as favorable a light as possible. We can assume that any material in the texts that is not only ill-suited to support these goals, but indeed contradicts them reflects the extra-textual experiences of their authors, as none of them had any other reason to include such material.

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya offers particularly promising opportunities to identify and analyze material that contradicts the intentions behind its com-

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521   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145.
522   Behzadi, Art 165.
523   Kraemer, *Philosophy* x. See also Kraemer, *Philosophy* 31–45, 136; Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*
       77; Bergé, al-Tawḥīdī 112, 115, 122; Ahsan, *Life* 7; Shalaby, *History* 38. Griffel and Hachmeier,
       Prophets 226, 231, is more cautious.

position, given that our relatively comprehensive knowledge about its origin context allows us to locate relevant content with a comparatively high level of certainty.[524] Pertinent passages fall into two categories: first, those that stand in opposition to the goal of the work of praising al-Ghawrī and his reign; and second, those that throw a negative light on al-Sharīf, who, inter alia, composed the work to demonstrate his value to the sultan as a member of his court.

A noteworthy example from the first category is the following passage, which recounts a legal discussion in the sultan's *majlis*:

> **Question:** It was said in a historiographical work (*tārīkh*): What is the teaching of the *'ulamā'* about a man who marries his sister and has children with her, and [only] later learns that she is his sister?
>
> Ibn al-Jawzī wrote: "Neither are to be harmed and neither committed a crime, since there was between them a marriage of uncertainty (*nikāḥ al-shubha*)."[525]
>
> The sultan said: "There is no uncertainty as to their marriage (*lā shubhata fī nikāḥimā*)! Rather, their marriage has been consummated."
>
> **Answer:** I said: "Something like this is what the jurisconsults call a marriage of uncertainty (*nikāḥ al-shubha*). This does not mean that there is uncertainty as to their [consummation of the] marriage."[526]

This passage does not reflect favorably on the sultan's knowledge of *fiqh*, as al-Ghawrī is shown here as being ignorant of the prominent legal concept of *shubha*, which Rowson explains as follows:

> In law, a *shubha* is an illicit act which nevertheless "resembles" a licit one, and is relevant primarily to the *ḥadd* offences [...] and especially to fornication (*zinā*). In attempting to avoid as much as possible imposition of the severe *ḥadd* penalties (stoning, amputation, and flogging), the jurists appealed to a prophetic *ḥadīth* instructing the believers to "avert the *ḥadd* penalties by means of ambiguous cases" (*idraʾū 'l-ḥudūd bi 'l-shubuhāt*). Thus, in contradistinction to other areas of the law, commission of a *ḥadd*

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524   See section 3.1.1.3 above.

525   I have not been able to locate this statement in any of Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1200) published writings. However, his works did not survive in their entirety (cf. Laoust, Ibn al-Djawzī 752), so the quotation is not necessarily spurious.

526   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 215–6.

offence through ignorance is considered grounds for suspension of the prescribed penalty.[527]

This legal concept is found in all currently extant schools of law, but received particular attention in the Ḥanafī *madhhab* to which both al-Sharīf and the sultan apparently belonged.[528]

In the case discussed in the sultan's *majlis*, the labeling of the siblings' marriage as a *nikāḥ al-shubha* reflects the fact that they were not aware that their marriage was forbidden because of their blood relationship. Since they considered their marriage licit, they acted in bona fide and were not be punished, as is expressed in the ruling attributed to Ibn al-Jawzī. Such a case of intercourse between two parties that legally are not allowed to engage in a sexual relationship but to whom the unlawfulness of their actions is not evident is a typical example of the application of the concept of *shubha*.[529]

The above-quoted passage presents the sultan not only as totally unaware of this legal concept, but also as misinterpreting the term *shubha* in a very naïve way; he assumed that in the legal context, it bears the common meaning of "uncertainty." Consequently, he points out the obvious by stating that there is no uncertainty with regard to whether or not a marriage that produced children was consummated, thereby clearly demonstrating his inability to grasp the legal implications of the case. Moreover, the passage does not depict al-Sharīf as trying to conceal the sultan's misunderstanding or even as pointing it out tactfully. Rather, his reply to the sultan is quite blunt and makes it very clear that the ruler is ignorant of the relevant legal terminology. Even according to his own work, al-Sharīf thus embarrassed al-Ghawrī in front of his subordinates.

There is no apparent way to explain this passage of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as being in line with al-Sharīf's presumed intentions in composing his work. This passage does not present the sultan in a favorable light, nor is it well-suited to improve the relationship between al-Sharīf and his patron, given that al-Sharīf bluntly pointed out the sultan's mistake. Moreover, it seems very improbable that al-Sharīf would try to present himself here as particularly learned at his patron's expense. The only conceivable reason al-Sharīf would include this account of the discussion is because it reflected his experience of what had taken place in the sultan's *majlis*.

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527   Rowson, S̲h̲ubha 492.
528   Rowson, S̲h̲ubha 492.
529   Cf. Peters, Zinā 510. On *shubha*, see also Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 269, 312, 317; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 24–5, 45–6, 51, 65, 67; Rabb, *Doubt*; and on *shubha* and *zinā*, see Katz, Penalty 354.

A second, similar case relates to the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*). In 911/1506, the official pilgrimage caravans from Egypt and Syria to Mecca had to be canceled, thus depriving the Muslim population of the Mamluk Sultanate of the chance to fulfill their religious obligations. The reason for this cancellation was the instability of the situation in the Hijaz, which a Mamluk military intervention managed to pacify only the following year.[530] The fact that Mamluk authorities were not able to organize the pilgrimage according to custom was a severe blow to al-Ghawrī's reputation.[531]

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya makes clear that the cancellation of the *ḥajj* was an extremely problematic affair for the Mamluk ruling elite, including the sultan. Nevertheless, al-Sharīf dedicates an entire *majlis* to this topic and discusses it at length.[532] The date of this *majlis* precedes the date Ibn Iyās gives for the sultan's decree to suspend the pilgrimage. This suggests that the *majlis* might have taken place before al-Ghawrī had reached a final decision about the matter.

At the beginning of the *majlis*, the sultan is presented as asking the participants for news about what was going on among the population of Cairo. Those present hesitated to answer the sultan's question. Finally, one of them summoned the courage to tell the sultan that the population was praying for the departure of the pilgrimage caravan. To this, the sultan replied that the pilgrimage took place every year and that he was going to take the necessary military actions to make sure that the caravan could also leave this year.[533] Then, the sultan went on to ask whether the pilgrimage had ever been canceled in the past. An unnamed participant declared that it had indeed been suspended before, during the Mongol invasion, shortly after the last ʿAbbasid caliph of Baghdad had been killed.[534] By connecting the present situation to one of the greatest catastrophes of Islamicate history, the anonymous participant highlighted what was at stake at this crucial moment of al-Ghawrī's reign.

After discussing the suspension of the pilgrimage in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion, the *majlis* seems to have ended rather abruptly; it is, indeed, the briefest of all the sessions in terms of the time al-Sharīf recounts. Yet, on the textual level, the author was evidently not yet finished, as he ended his account of the *majlis* with a *khātima* quoting the Prophet Muḥammad as say-

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530   See section 2.1.2.2 above.
531   See section 5.2.2 below.
532   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 180–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72–4.
533   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72.
534   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181; (ed. ʿAzzām) 73.

ing: "A Muslim is one who helps the Muslims with his tongue and his hand."[535] By including this *ḥadīth*, al-Sharīf was implicitly pointing out that it was al-Ghawrī's obligation as a Muslim believer to assist his co-religionists in fulfilling their religious obligations.

Yet, ultimately al-Ghawrī could not ensure the security of the *ḥajj* and therefore had to stop all Mamluk pilgrimage caravans. By including the material just presented, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* suggested to readers who were aware of the cancellation of the pilgrimage that al-Ghawrī had failed in his endeavors to secure the pilgrimage, that the result was a disaster comparable to that which followed the Mongol sacking of Baghdad, and that the ruler had also fallen short in fulfilling his duties as a Muslim believer. It seems that the *majlis* participants knew that such a such a negative evaluation of the sultan's handling of the pilgrimage affair was not far-fetched, given that they did not want to reveal to the sultan that the population of Cairo prayed for the safety of the pilgrimage caravan, because they feared that a truthful answer might irritate him.[536]

By including a lengthy account of the discussion about the cancellation of the pilgrimage in his work, al-Sharīf evidently made a choice that was not based on his goal of praising the sultan and soliciting his patronage. Instead of simply leaving out this sensitive topic, he wrote an account of the sultan's *majlis* that appears to be reliable precisely because it stands in opposition to the author's primary goals in writing his work.

As mentioned, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* also includes several passages that reflect negatively on al-Sharīf and jeopardize his attempts to ingratiate himself with al-Ghawrī. We have already discussed the lengthy passage toward the end of the work, where al-Sharīf is presented as a stubborn dissenting voice in an exegetical debate that ultimately irritated the sultan so much that he banished all *majlis* participants from his presence.[537] Moreover, the sultan objected to the assumption endorsed by al-Sharīf that the Prophet Muḥammad knew Persian.[538] As seen above, this issue was of considerable importance to

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535　Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 183; (ed. ʿAzzām) 74. Variants of this *ḥadīth* are included, e.g., by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd.

536　It is not clear whether al-Sharīf penned this passage before al-Ghawrī issued his degree to cancel the pilgrimage, as the most probable date for the completion of the work, i.e., soon after Shaʿban 911/December 1505, coincides with the date of Shawwāl 911/February–March 1506 given by Ibn Iyās for the decree. Yet, it must have been clear to al-Sharīf while he was writing that the situation in the Hijaz had worsened since the *majlis* took place and that al-Ghawrī had failed to implement the security measures announced there. The sultan's failure to guarantee the security of the *ḥajj* was thus evident at the time of writing.

537　See section 3.1.1.3 above.

538　Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 82.

al-Sharīf, given his strong identification with the Persian cultural and linguistic heritage.[539] Elsewhere, the sultan is shown as noting that talking too much is blameworthy unless it serves the quest for knowledge or the giving of advice. When al-Sharīf then told another *majālis* participant to pay heed to the sultan's admonition, the latter turned to al-Sharīf and replied "I said this only because of you!"[540] In another passage, al-Sharīf's financial interests were affected when the sultan forbade him and all other descendants of the Prophet to accept money from the alms tax and voluntary alms.[541] The inclusion of these passages was clearly not to al-Sharīf's benefit—a fact that speaks in favor of their historicity.

Like the passages in *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that reflect negatively on the sultan, in several discussions, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* portrays him as not having the final decision. In at least two instances, the ruler's interpretation of Quranic verses was superseded by alternative understandings that deprived him of his self-proclaimed status as the supreme exegetical authority.[542] Moreover, even the sultan's laudatory biography in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* mentions issues that could be interpreted as reflecting negatively on the sultan's abilities, such as the fact that he was only promoted to the rank of a junior officer when he was forty.[543] Hence, although it is plausible that the texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* often "erased from the record"[544] what was contrary to the authors' narrative goals, these works nevertheless contain material that casts an unfavorable light on their authors and dedicatee, suggesting that their contents reflect the formers' experiences at the sultan's court.

(4) A cross-textual comparison of the contents of the works likewise indicates that they constitute reliable historical sources. As shown below, events narrated in one of the texts also appear—in more than sixty cases—in another work. In these instances, the texts agree on the main features of the events, but do not sufficiently overlap, word for word, to support the assumption that one of them depends on the other. Rather, the comparison of relevant passages points to the conclusion that these texts are independent accounts of the same events narrated by different people from their own unique angles. There is, however, one important caveat: As seen,[545] it is likely that *al-Kawkab*

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539   See section 3.1.1.3 above.
540   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 192; (ed. ʿAzzām) 78.
541   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 217; (ed. ʿAzzām) 98.
542   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 33; 141–2. See also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 102–4.
543   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 79ʳ–79ᵛ.
544   Irwin, Thinking 49.
545   Cf. section 3.1.3.3 above.

al-durrī and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* share the same author or are at least par-
tially dependent on one another. Therefore, parallels between these two texts
are not relevant for the present discussion.

Appendix 3 provides an overview of the 67 identifiable parallel passages in
the parts of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* or *al-ʿUqūd al-
jawhariyya* that describe events and discussions in the sultan's *majlis*.[546] More
than four-fifths of these parallels appear in the question-and-answer sections
of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī,* but the former work also
includes largely anecdotal material that appears in a similar form in *al-ʿUqūd
al-jawhariyya.* In one case, similar material appears in all three works.

The degree to which parallel passages in the works are identical varies con-
siderably. In some cases, two texts clearly narrate the same events, but exhibit
no word-for-word overlap, or almost none. The passages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-
sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* dealing with the prayer of naked people
discussed above[547] are a case in point. A comparison between *Nafāʾis majālis al-
sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* yields similar results. For example, both
works recount a discussion based on the same unidentified historical work that
focused, inter alia, on the indecent behavior of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b.
Yazīd (r. 125–6/743–4). In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* the respective passage
reads:

> The author of the work of history said: "No one ever brought about in
> Islam something similar [to what Walīd brought about]." And our lord
> the sultan said: "Nor did anyone from the unbelievers, too."[548]

The same idea also appears in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*:

> The author of the work of history said: "No one from among the Muslims
> did what al-Walīd did." [...] He whose victory may be glorious [that is, the
> sultan] said: "Nay, neither a Christian nor a Mazdaist nor any other person
> who ever did anything did something similar to what this ill-fated sinner
> did."[549]

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546   The appendix only includes passages that the sources clearly identify as reflecting what
        was said and done in the sultan's *majlis*, and leaves out material from the narrative frame
        of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and the *munāsib* and *khātima* sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-
        sulṭāniyya*.
547   See section 3.1.2.3 above.
548   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 214.
549   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 83ʳ. On this passage and its context, see Mauder, Read.

There can little doubt that both works narrate here, in different words, the same reaction by the sultan.

In other cases, there is a limited word-for-word overlap between two works narrating the same conversation. A typical example in both the original Arabic and English translation reads as follows, with identical words printed in red in the Arabic:

السؤال السادس فما توفيق بين قوله حب الدنيا راس كل خطيئة و يبين قوله حب الهرة من الايمان

الجواب قال مولانا السلطان بعد تصحيحه فنقول معنى حب الهرة ان تحبكم الهرة لا ان تحبوها فحبة الهرة لكم من الايمان

Sixth question: "What is the harmonization between [the Prophet's] saying 'The love of the world is the beginning of every sin'[550] and 'The love of the she-cat is part of faith'?"[551]

Answer: Our lord the sultan said, after checking its correctness: "We say that the meaning of 'love of the she-cat' is that the she-cat loves you, not that you love her. The she-cat's love for you is thus a part of faith."[552]

سؤال في قوله عليه السلام حب الهرة من الايمان وحب الوطن من الايمان وورد ايضا حب الدنيا راس كل خطيئة وتركها راس كل عبادة ولا شك ان الوطن والهرة من الدنيا

الجواب فنقول على تقدير صحتها ان المراد من الوطن هو الوطن الاصلي وهو دار الاخرة ونقول في الثاني انه مضاف الى المفعول اى حب الهرة لكم لا انكم تحبون الهرة

Question: "Regarding the saying[s] of him upon whom be peace [that is, the Prophet]: 'The love of the she-cat is part of faith.' and 'The love of the

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550   This *ḥadīth* is not included in the standard Sunni collections, but is widely attested in Sunni literature. See, e.g., al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durar* 63.

551   This *ḥadīth* is not included in the standard Sunni collections. However, it attracted the attention of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606) who wrote an entire work about it known as *Sharḥ ḥadīth ḥubb al-hirra min al-īmān* (Commentary on the *ḥadīth* "The love of the she-cat is part of faith"). On this *ḥadīth*, see also, e.g., van Ess, *Träume* 37; Schimmel, *Katze* 8, 10; Würtz, *Theologie* 29.

552   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 26–7.

homeland is part of faith.'[553] And it is also narrated: 'The love of the world is the beginning of every sin and leaving it is the beginning of all worship.' Undoubtedly, the homeland and the she-cat belong to the world."

Answer: "We say based on assessing that it is correct: What is meant here by 'homeland' is [one's] original homeland, that is, the hereafter. As for the second, we say that it is a *genitivus subjectivus*, that is, it means the she-cat's love for you, not that you love the she-cat."[554]

There can be little doubt that both passages recount a discussion about the same problem, which is solved, in both cases, in the same way. Moreover, they use partially identical phrases that constitute citations of *ḥadīth*s or references to the cited material.

The best explanation for these findings is that both texts are independent accounts of the same discussion in the sultan's *majlis*. They are identical in terms of the quotations from authoritative religious sources that form the topic of the discussion. But apart from these quotations, each uses its own phrasing to present the arguments brought up in the *majlis*. This applies not only to the two passages cited, but also to numerous other discussions in the *majālis* that are listed in appendix 3 and that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* on the one hand and the two other main sources on the other hand recount in identical words as far as quoted *ḥadīth*s, Quranic verses, and related terminology are concerned. Indeed, in numerous cases, technical terminology plays a major role in explaining the partial word-for-word overlap between parallel accounts. Especially in questions dealing with matters of *fiqh*, legal, non-replaceable technical language is almost ubiquitous. Here as elsewhere, the appearance of similar or identical technical terminology in two works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* suggests that the authors of the texts tried to faithfully represent the key terms of the discussions they recounted, while using their own words to narrate all other, non-technical elements.

As the example just quoted shows, passages in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* often include details that are absent from parallel accounts in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. In case one does not accept the evidence adduced so far that the two works are independent, this observation might be taken to suggest that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* depends on *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and presents, at least in part, an abbreviated version of its contents.[555]

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553   This *ḥadīth* is not included in the standard Sunni collections, but is widely attested in Sunni literature. See, e.g., al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durar* 65.

554   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 164–5.

555   The fact that parallel passages in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* usually include more detailed inform-

Yet two main arguments speak against this possibility. Based on the codicological evidence, we know, first, that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is considerably *older* than *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. Second, there are a few parallel passages in which *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* contains information not found in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.[556]

There is one further possible objection against the assumed textual independence of the works: It is conceivable that the similarities in the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are not a result of being based on the same events, but rather show that all three works quote a hitherto unknown fourth text. However, there is no discernable pattern in the distribution of parallel passages across the three works that would support this possibility. For example, some of the passages describing a given discussion in the sultan's *majlis* at the beginning of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* have a respective parallel toward the end of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, while others correspond to a section in the middle of the latter work, and others to a passage located at its beginning.[557] Thus, if we assume that the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and the author(s) of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* quoted from the same work, then they must have purposefully distributed what they found in their *Vorlage* randomly throughout their works. There is little that speaks in favor of this assumption. Rather, it seems plausible to accept the authors' claims that they arranged the material they had gathered during their participation in the sultan's *majlis* according to the principles analyzed above.

Furthermore, several parallel accounts reveal discrepancies that are hardly explicable if they were based on the same source. These discrepancies pertain, most importantly, to who said what during discussions. In most instances, parallel accounts do not vary in this sense and name either the same disputants or leave them, in part, unnamed. In a few cases, however, we find contradictory statements, especially with regard to Sultan al-Ghawrī. Note the following example:

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ation than that given in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* precludes the opposite alternative that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* could be based on *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, as we would then have to postulate that the more detailed work constitutes an enlarged version of the original text—an assumption that seems highly unlikely given what we know about premodern Arabic literary culture.

556 See appendix 3, numbers 3, 7, 16, 19, 20, 21, 51, 52, and 61.
557 See columns 2 to 4 of the table in appendix 3.

Second question: "Both [that is, the prophets Joseph and Solomon] asked for the world. Joseph received only Egypt, while Solomon received authority over all the Earth."

Answer: Our lord the sultan said: "[This happened] because Joseph asked the ruler for power, and not the One who is the owner of [all] power, as is indicated by his saying [to the ruler]: 'Put me in charge of the Earth's storehouses,'558 [Q 12:55] while Solomon said [to God]: 'Lord, grant me such power as no one will have' [Q 38:35]."559

Question: His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Solomon and Joseph, upon whom be peace, asked for the world. Joseph received only Egypt, while Solomon received ownership of the face of the Earth far and wide, including wild animals, birds, *jinn*s, and humans, although [our] lord Joseph will be asked on judgment day about the reckoning of his rule, unlike Solomon."

Answer: "[This happened] because Joseph, upon whom be peace, asked the ruler for power by saying: 'Put me in charge of the Earth's storehouses,'560 [Q 12:55] while Solomon asked God Most High for power by saying: 'Lord, grant me such power as no one after me will have' [Q 38:35]."561

A comparison of these two parallel passages, which evidently describe the same discussion, yields several results already familiar to us: they overlap considerably since they quote the same Quranic material and use the same technical terminology, and the second passage from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* features details not found in the shorter version from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.

What is new, however, is that the two accounts include conflicting information as to who posed the question about Solomon and Joseph and who replied to it. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the sultan asks the question and it is answered by an unnamed interlocutor, while *al-Kawkab al-durrī* presents the situation the other way around. This is not an isolated observation. In 11 of our 67 cases,562 parallel accounts provide conflicting information as to who posed or answered a certain question. In all cases, at least one version names the sultan as an interlocutor in the conversation.

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558   Translation Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.
559   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 21–2.
560   Translation Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.
561   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 122.
562   Entries numbers 4, 8, 9, 11, 20, 21, 22, 28, 35, 36, and 43 in appendix 3.

This observation speaks strongly against the assumption that all of our sources are based on the same written source, as we would then have to postulate that the authors consciously but unsystematically manipulated the information regarding who had said what in the *majālis* found in their *Vorlage*.[563] Attributions of the same statements to different persons are, however, a typical characteristic of independent eyewitness accounts of the same events. The explanation for this fact lies in the way the human memory works. As cognitive psychology teaches us, eyewitnesses often have problems pinning down the correct source of a given statement, especially if they are dealing with multiple statements that are similar in content.[564] Given that many of the questions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* pertained to closely related and similar, but distinct subjects, the authors of our main sources, even if they were eyewitness of the events, might well have made mistakes in attributing certain statements to specific persons, especially if these persons uttered similar statements at other points in the discussion.[565] Furthermore, highlighting the sultan's role by attributing statements to him (even statements that were made by someone else) aligns with the intentions of the authors of all three works.

The results of the intertextual comparison of our three main sources thus strongly support the assumption that *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* on the one hand and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* on the other hand are, for all practical purposes, independent sources based on the same events.[566] Consequently, the considerable degree of overlap in substance, but not necessarily in wording in their descriptions of these events speaks compellingly to their reliability as historical sources. No explanation for the parallels in the

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563   One could argue that the *Vorlage* did not include information regarding the attribution of specific statements to *majālis* participants. Then, however, we would have to explain why only 11 out of 67 parallel passages include conflicting information on this point.

564   Eyseneck and Keane, *Cognitive Psychology* 283–4. See also, e.g., Anderson, *Kognitive Psychologie* 149; Davis and Friedman, Memory 32–6; Davis, Kemmelmeier, and Folette, Memory 12-11-8.

565   Cognitive psychology can also explain why two parallel accounts of the same discussion agree in substance, but not in wording. Human beings are generally rather well able to retain the meaning of words they hear in their long term memory, but have difficulties in remembering the exact wording of what was said to them after about one minute, cf. Krech et al., *Lern- und Gedächtnispsychologie* 61. See also Davis and Friedman, Memory 11–3; Davis, Kemmelmeier, and Folette, Memory 12-9-10.

566   We can, of course, never be sure that the author(s) of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* did not read *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* before composing his/their works and did not take the latter work as an inspiration. However, we can definitely say that he, or they, did not systematically rely on or copy from it.

works stands to reason, other than accepting their authors' claims that they are based on what was said and done in the sultan's *majālis*.

The intertextual comparison also demonstrates the limitations of our main sources: Based on the available evidence, it appears to be impossible to reconstruct the exact words exchanged in the sultan's *majlis*. Our sources narrate the substance of what was said and done and also incorporate quotations from authoritative texts and technical terms that constituted part of the discussions, but they recount these conversations, for the most part, according to meaning and do not provide us with records of their exact wording. Moreover, we should be cautious in accepting information from our sources about *who* said *what* during the *majālis*, as the texts sometimes include contradictory information in this regard. This applies especially, but not only, to attributions of statements to al-Ghawrī.

(5) Finally, there is evidence from other narrative texts and the natural sciences that supports the reliability of our sources. The scientific evidence relates to a lunar eclipse mentioned in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that is dealt with in further detail below.[567] Suffice it to mention here that the description of the eclipse in our source closely matches what modern science tells us about what must have been observable in Cairo.

The evidence from other narrative sources is of four types: First, there is information that confirms al-Ghawrī's interest in scholarly matters and thus matches the image of the sultan that our sources convey. This rather general kind of evidence is reviewed in detail below.[568] Second, we have evidence confirming that al-Ghawrī held salons in which learned topics were discussed. For example, Ibn Iyās, who, as we saw, cannot be accused of being overly fulsome in his praise of the sultan, writes:

> [The sultan] was very fond of the recitation of works of history (*tawārīkh*), biographies (*siyar*), and collections of poetry. He was close to the members of the elite and used to love jesting and merrymaking [with them] in his *majlis* (*fī majlisihi*), being of a refined nature.[569]

This reference to al-Ghawrī's *majlis* in Ibn Iyās' work corroborates not only that the sultan convened such events, but also corresponds well to what we know about their character from our main sources, including his interest in historical and biographical works that figures so prominently in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.

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567   See section 4.2.9 below.
568   See section 4.1.2.1 below.
569   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89. See also Petry, *Twilight* 137, 170–1, 196; Petry, *Protectors* 23, 85–6, 165.

Another relevant piece of information comes from the biographical diction-
ary of Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971/1563),[570] whose reference to the sultan's *majālis*
cannot be mistaken for flattery, as it appears in a passage critical about the sul-
tan's pomposity:

> [Al-Ghawrī's] sultanate was characterized by a continuous life of luxury
> and the fulfillment of [all his] wishes with regard to food, drink, women,
> listening [to music], learned disputation[s] (*muḥāḍara*), and nightly con-
> versation[s] (*musāmara*) together with his companion[s] (*jalīs*) and
> intimate[s] (*anīs*), including the chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn [al-]Shiḥna
> al-Ḥanafī and others.[571]

Ibn al-Ḥanbalī confirms again the existence of al-Ghawrī's salons, which he
refers to as *muḥāḍara* and *musāmara*, thereby indicating that they took place
at night. Moreover, he names ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna as a particularly prom-
inent participant in these events, thus confirming what our main sources, and
here especially *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, say about this man's role in the sultan's
majālis.

The literary offering *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* discussed below[572] likewise
mentions, in a passage describing al-Ghawrī's intellectual interests, that the
sultan spent the night hours in his *majālis* posing questions to the learned.[573]
Furthermore, in its epilogue, the Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme*
commissioned by al-Ghawrī includes a lengthy description of the ruler's *mec-
lis*.[574] In particular, it praises the discussions dealing with topics from various,
but especially religious, disciplines.[575] Further evidence in support of the reli-
ability of our main sources comes from the Ottoman realm. A work by Muṣṭafā
ʿAlī (d. 1008/1600) confirms not only that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* took place, but
also corroborates the claim made in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* that the Ottoman
prince Qurqud (d. 918/1513) took part in them.[576]

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570   On him, see section 3.2.2 below.
571   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 48.
572   See section 3.2.3.
573   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 243ᵛ–244ʳ.
574   On this text, see section 3.2.2 below. For the respective passage, see Kültüral and Beyreli
      (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1990–2. See also Zajączkowski, Traduction 60; ʿAzzām
      (ed.), *Majālis* 47–8; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 174; D'hulster, Sitting 239, 252–3.
575   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1990.
576   Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Gentleman* 95. On this Ottoman prince in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see 4.1.2.3
      below.

Third, historical data from works such as Ibn Iyās' chronicle consistently agree with information, such as death dates, found in our sources.[577]

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, there is one instance in which an Arabic source apparently unrelated to the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* confirms that a specific question was discussed during these events. The literary offering *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* mentioned above includes a passage on four eschatological questions al-Ghawrī posed "to those who came to him from among the erudite of those who sat with him (*fuḍalā' julasā'ihi*)."[578] The second of these questions appears together with its answer in a very similar, though not identical form, in both *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.[579] Thus, we have conclusive and textually independent evidence that the sultan indeed debated one of the questions included in both works with members of his court.

In light of the aforementioned evidence, we can conclude that *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are, in general, reliable historical sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as is corroborated by the history of the interpretation of the texts, their genre and communicative functions, evidence from individual texts, the results of intertextual comparisons, and external narrative and scientific evidence. However, we must also acknowledge that in terms of specific statements in our sources, we can often only adduce circumstantial evidence regarding their historicity and have to take into account the historical, literary, and cultural context of the texts.[580] We should be especially careful when such statements appear to support the communicative functions of the works, for example, by reflecting positively on al-Ghawrī or the first-person narrators of our texts. In such instances, we must not forget that we are dealing with narrative texts that, inter alia, served to legitimate the sultan's reign and support their author's patronage interests.

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577   Examples include al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 118–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38–50; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 81 (celebration of the Prophet's birthday); al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 115–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 36; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 81 (Syrian governor Sībāy coming to Cairo); al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 47–8, 187, 202; (ed. ʿAzzām) 20–1, 75, 87; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 77–8, 83–4, 84 (deaths of al-Ghawrī's son Muḥammad, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Ibn al-Farfūr al-Dimashqī, respectively).

578   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 244ʳ.

579   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 244ʳ, 245ʳ–245ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 238; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS).

580   See also Lake, Intention 351; Holt, Ruler 35.

3.2   Other Arabic Sources

In addition to our three main sources, we have at our disposal numerous other, less central Arabic sources that include information on al-Ghawrī's court. The following sections introduce a selection of such supplementary Arabic sources from the cultural context of al-Ghawrī's court and beyond.

3.2.1   *Chronicles, Journals, and Historical Romances*

Besides Ibn Iyās' *Badā'i' al-zuhūr* introduced above, several other Arabic chronicles yield relevant information on al-Ghawrī's tenure and his court. Here "chronicle" denotes a historiographical text that follows a chronological order and claims to provide a factual account of the events it narrates.[581]

After Ibn Iyās, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Dimashqī (d. 953/ 1546) is probably the second most prominent author of historiographical texts writing in the last years of the Mamluk Sultanate.[582] Among Ibn Ṭūlūn's huge literary output, the most relevant, for our purposes, are the surviving parts of his chronicle *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* (The joking of friends on the incidents of time) which is based largely on Ibn Ṭūlūn's personal notes and constitutes a first-rate source on the history of Damascus and its surroundings between 884/1480 and 951/1544.[583] *Mufākahat al-khillān* contains valuable information on how Mamluk policy and court life were perceived in the most important Syrian province of the sultanate. Yet, Ibn Ṭūlūn's geographic focus also precludes more detailed accounts of the sultan's court and its affairs,[584] with the exception of al-Ghawrī's sojourn in Damascus before the battle of Marj Dābiq when Ibn Ṭūlūn visited the sultan's military camp.[585] The presently available form of *Mufākahat al-khillān* is incomplete; accounts for several years are

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581   On the definition of Mamluk chronicles, see, e.g., Wollina, Ego-Document 344.
582   On his life and works, see Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn; Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 94–5; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 269–71; Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 8–21; Laoust, Introduction, in Laoust (trans.), *Gouverneurs* ix–xvi; Dahmān, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā*, sīn–shīn.
583   Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 89, 95–102; Petry, *Underworld* 21. On this work see also Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 131; Newhall, *Patronage* 9; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 269–71; Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 16–21; Laoust, Introduction, in Laoust (trans.), *Gouverneurs* xv–xvi; Jansky, Chronik.
584   On this point, see also Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 89, 102; Jansky, Chronik 24, 29; Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 8.
585   Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 13, 16; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 18–9. On this context, see also Jansky, Chronik 26.

missing completely.[586] Ibn Ṭūlūn's second surviving chronicle, *I'lām al-warā bi-man wulliya nā'iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-kubrā* (The information for mankind on who was appointed governor in Damascus in greater Syria from among the Turks) focuses primarily on the governors of Damascus from 658/1260 to 943/1536.[587] Compared to *Mufākahat al-khillān*, *I'lām al-warā* provides a much less detailed historiographical account composed long after the actual events.[588] This, together with its focus on Syria, limits its value as a source for the present study.[589]

Another chronicler, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Anṣārī, known as Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (d. 934/1527), likewise spent most of his time in Syria, but also served for some time between 900/1494 and 914/1508 in Cairo as a deputy judge and preacher (*khāṭib*) of the Citadel Mosque.[590] His major historiographical work survived only in the form of an epitome (*mukhtaṣar*) entitled *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān* (The events of the time and obituaries of elders and peers), which includes often very concise descriptions of historical events covering the years from 851/1447 to 930/1524, together with biographical information on the noteworthy contemporaries of the author.[591] The fact that most of what Ibn al-Ḥimṣī reports is based on his personal experience[592] means that for the years he spent in Cairo, events taking place there occupy center stage in his narrative. In the Egyptian capital, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's temporary position as *khāṭib* of the Citadel Mosque brought him into close contact with Sultan al-Ghawrī, who appointed him as his personal preacher.[593]

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586   Cf. the detailed overview in Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 50–1. On the lacunae, see also Lellouch, *Ottomans* 270; Muṣṭafā, Introduction, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 7, 9 (English section); Muṣṭafā, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 7–8; but note also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ḥawādith Dimashq al-yawmiyya*.

587   Laoust, Introduction, in Laoust (trans.), *Gouverneurs* xvi–xix. On this work, see also Dahmān, Muqaddima, in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-warā*, wāw-nūn.

588   Lellouch, *Ottomans* 270–1. According to Laoust, Introduction, in Laoust (trans.), *Gouverneurs* xvii–xviii, Ibn Ṭūlūn wrote this text in or before 910/1504 and continued to work on it until at least 943/1536.

589   See also Petry, *Protectors* 9; Petry, *Twilight* 13.

590   On him, see Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 9–36; Behrens-Abouseif, *Fire* 279–81; and on the Citadel Mosque, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iv.1, 313–8, 681–2; Shoshan, *Damascus* 14–5.

591   Behrens-Abouseif, *Fire* 279–80; Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 36–40. See also Lellouch, *Ottomans* 271. Translation of the title partially taken from Petry, *Underworld* 20.

592   Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 52–3.

593   Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 25, 33–4.

Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, in turn, included favorable remarks and a very positive obituary of al-Ghawrī in his chronicle.[594] As the ruler's preacher, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī had direct access to the sultan's court and could collect firsthand information on its activities, especially those that were religious in nature.[595] Therefore, it is truly unfortunate that major parts of Ibn al-Ḥimṣī work, which is already abridged—including his complete account of the period from 909/1503 to 914/1509 and most of the year 915/1509–10—appear to be lost.[596]

Even more than the other Syrian chronicles surveyed here, the surviving part of Ḥamza b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Sibāṭ's (d. in or after 926/1520) Ṣidq al-akhbār (The truth of the news) focuses primarily on its region of production, which can be broadly identified as modern-day Lebanon.[597] Its description of the last years of Mamluk and the first years of Ottoman rule is cursory at best, with many years not covered at all.[598] Similarly, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ṭawq's (d. 915/1509) famous al-Taʿlīq (The report) is of very limited value for the present study, as the available text stops in 906/1501 only weeks after al-Ghawrī's investiture.[599]

Chronicles from the Hijaz represent another important group of sources. They not only provide information on how Mamluk rule was perceived from the periphery of the Mamluk sphere of influence, but also show how Mamluk rulers strived to preserve and reaffirm their suzerainty over the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina, as custodians of the holy cities (sg. khādim al-ḥaramayn).[600]

Ever since its partial edition by Ferdinand Wüstenfeld in 1857, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nahrawālī's (d. 990/1582) Kitāb al-Iʿlām bi-aʿlām bayt Allāh al-ḥarām (Book of information on the distinguishing marks of the holy

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594   Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ḥawādith al-zamān i, 62. For the obituary, see Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ḥawādith al-zamān ii, 287.

595   Tadmirī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ḥawādith al-zamān i, 7–8.

596   Cf. the detailed overview in Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ḥawādith al-zamān i, 51. See also Lellouch, Ottomans 271.

597   On the author and his works, see Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Sibāṭ, Ṣidq al-akhbār 8–14.

598   Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ḥawādith al-zamān i, 46–8, 51; Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Sibāṭ, Ṣidq al-akhbār 16–7. On the work, see also Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Sibāṭ, Ṣidq al-akhbār 14–5.

599   On the work and its author, see Wollina, Alltag 35–40, 45–51, and passim; Wollina, Ego-Document 343–8; Wollina, News 285–6; Guo, Review; Conermann and Seidensticker, Remarks; Shoshan, Damascus 1–3, 19–37, and passim.

600   See section 5.2.2 below.

house of God) has been one of the most widely used sources on the history of Mecca and its surroundings during the Islamicate middle period up to the year 985/1577.[601] However, al-Nahrawālī's close association with the Ottoman dynasty influenced his presentation of, especially, late Mamluk rulers, who generally receive a far less favorable treatment than their Ottoman peers.[602]

The chronicle *Bulūgh al-qirā bi-dhayl Itḥāf al-warā* (Attaining a favorable reception by supplementing the *Itḥāf al-warā*) by the Meccan author ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Makkī, known as Ibn Fahd (d. 922/1517),[603] is a continuation (*dhayl*) of *Itḥāf al-warā bi-akhbār umm al-qurā* (Gifting to mankind news about the mother of cities) by his father Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar (d. 885/1480). *Bulūgh al-qirā* covers the years from 885/1480 to 922/1516 and stands out for the richness of its information on political, social, economic, and cultural developments.[604]

The available parts of Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ẓuhayra al-Makkī's (d. 986/1578) *al-Jāmiʿ al-laṭīf fī faḍāʾil Makka wa-bināʾ al-bayt al-sharīf* (The pleasant collector on the merits of Mecca and the building of the noble house), which was finished in 960/1553, are much less detailed than Ibn Fahd's work.[605] Despite the brevity of the passages of the work edited by Wüstenfeld, it provides relevant information on the Sharīfī succession crisis during the early tenth/sixteenth century in which al-Ghawrī intervened.[606]

The Meccan scholars ʿAlī b. Tāj al-Dīn b. Taqī l-Dīn al-Sinjārī (d. 1125/1713) and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn al-ʿĀṣimī (d. 1111/1699) were much too young to have experienced Mamluk rule directly.[607] Nevertheless, both al-Sinjārī's *Manāʾiḥ al-karam fī akhbār Makka wa-l-bayt wa-wulāt al-ḥaram* (Lamentations of the noble on the news of Mecca, the house, and the rulers of the sanctuary) and al-ʿĀṣimī's *Samṭ al-nujūm al-ʿawālī fī anbāʾ al-awāʾil wa-l-tawālī* (Azimuth of the high stars on the news of the ancients and moderns) provide snippets of information that are relevant for the present study, such as, for example,

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601　On him and his work, see Blackburn, al-Nahrawālī 911–2; Wüstenfeld, Vorrede, in al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* v–xii; Lunde, Devil 134; Winter, Chronicler 319.

602　Compare, e.g., al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 239–43 to iii, 248–90.

603　On his life, see Meloy, *Power* 29; Ibrāhīm, Abū l-Khuyūr, and al-Maḥlabdī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* i, 29–51.

604　Meloy, *Power* 29–30. On this work, see also Ibrāhīm, Abū l-Khuyūr, and al-Maḥlabdī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* i, 53–63.

605　Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 500. On this author, his family, and his work, see also Wüstenfeld, Vorrede, in Ibn Ẓuhayra, *al-Jāmiʿ al-laṭīf*, ed. Wüstenfeld ii, xvii–xxiii.

606　See Ibn Ẓuhayra, *al-Jāmiʿ al-laṭīf*, ed. Wüstenfeld ii, 342–3.

607　Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 502.

accounts of al-Ghawrī's construction activities in the Arabian Peninsula and the later fate of those structures.[608]

Ibn Zunbul's account of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt known, inter alia, as *Infiṣāl al-awān wa-ttiṣāl dawlat Banī ʿUthmān* (Differentiation of the moments and the advent of the fortune of the Ottoman clan) is not only the most enigmatic of the sources discussed here, but also the one that has received by far the largest amount of scholarly attention. Nevertheless, we have very little definite information about its author Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Zunbul al-Rammāl, not even his *floruit*. Carl Brockelmann considered Ibn Zunbul to be al-Ghawrī's contemporary and assumed that he worked in the administration of the Mamluk army.[609] In contrast, Doris Behrens-Abouseif argued that Ibn Zunbul lived in the early eleventh/seventeenth century.[610] Recently unearthed evidence, however, indicates that someone by the name of Ibn Zunbul was active as a geomancer and oneirocritic in Ottoman Egypt and Istanbul around the middle of the tenth/sixteenth century and probably died shortly after 983/1575. It is most likely that this man was the author of *Infiṣāl al-awān*.[611]

Ibn Zunbul's text is not an annalistic chronicle, but a carefully constructed narrative beginning with the march of the Mamluk army to Syria in 922/1516 and ending with the history of Egypt under Sultan Süleymān. The text focuses on displays of heroic bravery in the face of superior enemies, vile treason, and great men who prove themselves in times of trial.[612] Peter M. Holt aptly called the text "essentially a prose saga forming a threnody on the passing of the Mamlūk sultanate."[613] Similarly, Robert Irwin referred to it as "a prose romance"[614] and considered its author "the Arab world's first true historical novelist."[615] The peculiar character of *Infiṣāl al-awān* poses significant problems for any historical study seeking to use it as a source; the text is extant in a multitude of

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608   On al-Ghawrī's buildings, see, e.g., al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 171–2; al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 61, 64–5.

609   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 384. See also Jansky, Chronik 30; Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 43; Al-Tikriti, Review 260; Moustafa-Hamouzová, Conquest 190; Lellouch, L'Universalisme 144; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 273.

610   Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment* 9. See also Lellouch, *Ottomans* 273–4.

611   Lellouch, *Ottomans* 274–5. See also Irwin, Gunpowder 139; Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 4.

612   On its content, see Tadmurī, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 43; Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 5–6; Moustafa-Hamouzová, Conquest 190, 200; Lellouch, L'Universalisme 145–6; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 241–8, 275–7.

613   Holt, K̲h̲āʾir Beg 524. See also Holt, Ottoman Egypt 5.

614   Irwin, *Night* 443.

615   Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 3. See also Irwin, Gunpowder 139; Irwin, *Night* 444; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 6; Winter, Occupation 491; and on the literary character, see now, especially, Shoshan, Ibn Zunbul.

slightly different versions and this further complicates the situation.[616] Therefore, unlike other publications on al-Ghawrī's time,[617] the present study draws on *Infiṣāl al-awān* very cautiously and only in conjunction with other sources. Moreover, its most widely available edition[618] is used alongside a manuscript providing a partly divergent text.[619]

3.2.2   *Biographical Dictionaries*

The earliest biographical dictionary, that is, a systematically arranged collection of biographical portraits[620] relevant to the present study is Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī's (d. 902/1497) *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ fī aʿyān al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (The bright light on the notables of the ninth century).[621] Given that the work covers only the ninth/fifteenth century and its author died before al-Ghawrī's reign, its significance is limited to information about the early life of some of al-Ghawrī's contemporaries.

The chronicler Ibn Ṭūlūn also wrote a biographical dictionary by the title of *al-Tamattuʿ bi-l-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān* (The enjoyment of combining biographies of elders and peers), which, however, has not survived. We have only extracts from this work, preserved by Ibn Ṭūlūn's student Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Munlā al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 1003/1594),[622] who compiled a biographical dictionary with the title *Mutʿat al-adhhān min al-tamattuʿ bi-l-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān* (The pleasure of ears based on 'The enjoyment of combining biographies of elders and peers'). This work constitutes an amalgam of entries from Ibn Ṭūlūn's *al-Tamattuʿ bi-l-aqrān*, biographies penned by Ibn Munlā himself, and material taken from *al-Riyāḍ al-yāniʿa fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa* (The mellowing gardens on the leading personalities of the ninth century) by the Damascene Ḥanbalī Yūsuf b.

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616   Irwin, Gunpowder 138–9; Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 4–5; Hartmann (ed.), *Fragment* 89. See also Irwin, *Night* 444, 447; Holt, Ottoman Egypt 5; Hathaway, Nostalgia 398; Moustafa-Hamouzová, Conquest 189, 206.

617   E.g., Jansky, Eroberung; Ayalon, *Gunpowder*, esp. 86–96.

618   Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān*, edited by Abd al-ʿAzīz Jamāl al-Dīn. On this edition, see also Al-Tikriti, Review.

619   Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, MS Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Landberg 461. On this manuscript, see Nemoy, *Manuscripts* 142.

620   On this genre, see, e.g., Afsaruddin, Dictionaries; Auchterlonie, *Dictionaries*; Auchterlonie, Historians; Khalidi, Dictionaries; Mauder, *Krieger* 28–32; Mojaddedi, *Tradition*; Loth, Ursprung; Makdisi, *Ṭabaqāt*-Biography; al-Qadi, Dictionaries; al-Qadi, Alternative History; Gibb, Biographical Literature; Khalidi, *Thought* 204–10; Hirschler, Studying 170–80; Robinson, *Historiography* 30, 46, 59–60, 66–74; Berger, *Gesellschaft* 1–6.

621   On the author and his work, see Petry, al-Sakhāwī; Martel-Thoumian, Dictionnaire.

622   Conermann, Review 242. On him, see Conermann, Review 244–5.

ʿAbd al-Hādī Ibn al-Mibrad (d. 909/1503), one of Ibn Ṭūlūn's teachers.[623] While we cannot attribute individual biographies to any of these three authors,[624] *Mutʿat al-adhhān* is a highly valuable source on leading personalities of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries, including numerous members of al-Ghawrī's court.[625]

Durr al-ḥabab fī tārīkh aʿyān Ḥalab (The pearls of dew on the history of the leading personalities of Aleppo) by Raḍī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf al-Ḥalabī, known as Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971/1563)[626] constitutes a biographical dictionary of famous people who were, in one way or another, connected to the city of Aleppo. It includes biographies of 664 men and women from different walks of life who died during the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries.[627] For the present study, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's biography of al-Ghawrī[628] is of considerable significance, as it not only sheds light on the sultan's early career and his character traits, but also on his cultural interests in general and his salons in particular.[629]

Al-Kawākib al-sāʾira fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-ʿāshira (The wandering stars on the leading personalities of the tenth century) by Najm al-Din Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651) is considerably later than *Mutʿat al-adhhān* and *Durr al-ḥabab*, but nevertheless highly useful.[630] It provides information on *ʿulamāʾ* and political figures of the tenth/sixteenth century and provides unparalleled detail on numerous people associated with al-Ghawrī and his court.[631]

Other late biographical collections, such as Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Qaramānī's (d. 1019/1611) *Akhbār al-duwal wa-āthār al-uwal fī l-tārīkh* (Historical news on the dynasties and the deeds of the ancients), Abū l-Falāḥ ʿAbd

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623 On him, see Leder, Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Hādī 354; Hirschler, *Monument*, esp. 23–64. For reasons of bibliographical clarity, I follow the editor of *Mutʿat al-adhhān* in referring to him as Ibn al-Mibrad.

624 Conermann, Review 245–6.

625 On al-Ghawrī, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 319–25, 377–9, 578.

626 On him, see al-Fākhūrī and ʿAbbāra, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i, 7m–20m; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 483–4; Suppl. ii, 495.

627 Al-Fākhūrī and ʿAbbāra, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i, 21m–23m, 52m. See also al-Fākhūrī and ʿAbbāra, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 24m–29m.

628 See Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 45–55.

629 See also Petry, *Protectors* 9; Petry, *Twilight* 12.

630 On him, see Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 376; Suppl. ii, 402; Jabbūr, Muqaddima, in al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, kāf-rāʾ; Berger, *Gesellschaft* 35–41.

631 On the work in detail, see Jabbūr, Muqaddima, in al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, bāʾ-jīm.

al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿImād's (d. 1089/1679) *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* (Gold nuggets on the news of those who passed away), or Marʿī b. Yūsuf al-Karmī's (d. 1033/1624) biographical work about the rulers of Egypt *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn fī tārīkh man waliya Miṣr min al-khulafāʾ wa-l-salāṭīn* (The diversion of onlookers on the history of those who ruled Egypt from among the caliphs and sultans) are mostly dependent on earlier works and add very little to our knowledge about al-Ghawrī and his contemporaries.[632] However, they demonstrate how deeply entrenched this ruler's image as a greedy and unjust lover of luxury had become over time in the Arabic historiographical tradition.[633]

3.2.3   *Literary Offerings and Related Works*

Five further relevant selected sources belong or are related to the genre of literary offerings discussed above.[634] While all of these works exhibit features typical for this kind of literature, their contents differ widely.

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Shāfiʿī's *Mawāhib al-laṭīf fī faḍl al-maqām al-sharīf fī manāqib al-Sulṭān Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī* (The gifts of the Gracious One regarding the merit of His Noble Station: On the virtues of Sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī) is in large part a thematically arranged collection of Quranic verses and canonical Sunni *ḥadīth*s. Almost nothing is known about its author, yet *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* demonstrates that Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn was knowledgeable in the fields of prophetic tradition and the science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*).[635] Furthermore, as is attested to by his work, Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn must have witnessed al-Ghawrī's ascension to the sultanate, leaving Shawwāl 906/April 1501 as terminus post quem for the compilation of the text.

The introduction of the work explains its structure and the reasons for its composition:

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632   On Ibn al-ʿImād and his work, see Rosenthal, Ibn al-ʿImād 807; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 403; on al-Qaramānī and his work, see Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 387–8; Suppl. ii, 412; Saʿd, Muqaddima, in al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* i, zāy-kāf.jīm; and on al-Karmī and his work Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 484–5; Suppl. ii, 469–70; al-Kandarī, Muqqadima, in al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 7–48.

633   I follow al-Qadi, Alternative History, in understanding biographical dictionaries as part of the historiographical tradition. For al-Ghawrī's biography, see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 113–6; al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 324–7; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 158–61.

634   See section 3.1.5 above for a discussion of this genre.

635   Sharqāwī, Muqaddima, in Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 24–5.

When I saw the justice (*'adl*) and the compassion (*shafaqa*) of our lord the sultan [...], I wanted to collect what was easy for me from among the prophetic traditions about the merit of the just sultan, the fighter [for the cause of God] (*mujāhid*), and other [topics]. I arranged it into five chapters:

The first chapter: On the merit of the just *imām*

The second chapter: On the merit of fighting for the cause of God and what is related to it

The third chapter: On compassion and mercy for mankind

The fourth chapter: On the merit of knowledge (*'ilm*) and bestowing kindness and honor on the *'ulamā'*.

These noble qualities come together in our lord the sultan, for he is a just ruler, belongs to the greatest fighters (*min a'ẓam al-mujāhidīn*) and [shows] all-encompassing compassion toward the Muslims. [...]

The fifth chapter: On the explanation of the letters of the name of our lord the sultan—may God grant him victory—and the great secrets that lie in his name.

[...] After finishing and completing [this book], I will, God willing, offer it (*uqaddimuhu*) to our lord the sultan—may God Most High grant him victory—so that he may benefit from studying it and know the merit of our lord the sultan over others.[636]

The structure of the work adheres to the plan outlined by the author: After an introductory Quranic verse, the first four chapters present *ḥadīth*s on their respective topics—forty each in the case of the first, second, and third chapters, twenty in the case of the fourth. The fifth chapter discusses the qualities of the letters of the name "Qāniṣawh" according to the science of letters based on the Quran and the names of God, but does not engage in letter magic or divination proper. The book ends with a short discussion of the characteristics of a just ruler.[637]

Given that, in his introduction, Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn explicitly noted that he was going to present his book to al-Ghawrī, we may assume that he hoped to be rewarded for his work, especially since he emphasized that "bestowing kindness and honor on the *'ulamā'*"[638] ranks among the most important virtues of a just ruler. Here as elsewhere, Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn based his argument on purely

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636 Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 28–9.

637 See also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 43–4.

638 Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 29.

religious foundations, citing the most important texts of Sunni Islam. *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* proves the existence of a purely religious discourse on rulership during al-Ghawrī's reign; thus it also suggests the presence of an audience responsive to religious strategies of the legitimation of rule.[639]

Compared to the somewhat obscure figure of Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, we know much more about the author of the second literary offering to al-Ghawrī of relevance here, Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ b. Khalīl b. Shāhīn al-Malaṭī, later al-Qāhirī. He was born in 844/1440–1 in the Anatolian town of Malatya into a family of *mamlūk* orgin and became a noted Ḥanafī jurisprudent and expert in medicine and other disciplines. Al-Malaṭī seems to have earned his livelihood, at least in part, as a member of the Shaykhūniyya Sufi *khānqāh* in Cairo. Speaking Ottoman Turkish, ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ established close connections with several Mamluk *amīr*s. He died in Rabīʿ II 920/June 1514 from an illness that had left him confined to his house for the last one and a half years of his life. During this time, al-Ghawrī supported him and his family.[640]

Based on internal evidence, we know that al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ* [*sic*] *al-bustān al-nawrī li-ḥaḍrat mawlānā l-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī* (The collection of the blooming garden for His Excellency, our lord Sultan al-Ghawrī) cannot have been written before Jumādā I 919/July 1513.[641] Thus, al-Malaṭī must have authored the work during his final illness. It has come down to us in a single unedited manuscript preserved in Istanbul[642] and comprises an introduction and fourteen small independent treatises, all of which were written or translated by al-Malaṭī. Its final section includes several poems by the author. Table 3.3 gives an overview of the contents of the work.[643]

In the introduction, al-Malaṭī explained that he wrote the text as a service (*khidma*) for al-Ghawrī, whom he called "the most magnificent sultan" (*al-*

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639   See also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 44. On another religious work dedicated to al-Ghawrī, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 107–8.

640   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 373–4; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* iii, 27. The information on al-Ghawrī's support is taken from Petry, *Twilight* 9; Petry, *Protectors* 7. On al-Malaṭī's life and works, see also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 32–3; ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī, Muqaddima, in al-Malaṭī, *Nuzhat* 7–9; ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī, Muqaddima, in al-Malaṭī, *Tārīkh al-anbiyāʾ* 9–12; ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī, *ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ* 15–32; al-Kandrī, Tarjamat al-muṣannif, in al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmaʿ al-mufannan* i, 9–14; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66; Suppl. ii, 52–3.

641   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 6ʳ.

642   MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 4793.

643   See also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 33–4. For references to the work, see Petry, *Twilight* 9; Petry, *Protectors* 7; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung; al-Kandrī, Tarjamat al-muṣannif, in al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmaʿ al-mufannan* i, 13; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 107.

TABLE 3.3   Overview of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī li-ḥaḍrat mawlānā l-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī*

Number	Folios	Title	Main topics
1	1ᵛ–13ᵛ	[Introduction, no independent title]	Praise of al-Ghawrī's reign, reasons for compilation of the work, table of contents, prayer for the Sultan
2	14ʳ–26ᵛ	*al-Tuḥfa al-fāyiḥa (sic) fī tafsīr sūrat al-Fātiḥa*	Exegesis of Q 1
3	27ʳ–35ᵛ	*al-Qawl al-khāṣṣ fī tafsīr sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*	Exegesis of Q 112
4	36ʳ–57ᵛ	*Ghāyat al-sūl fī sīrat al-rasūl*	Life of the Prophet Muḥammad[644]
5	58ʳ–71ʳ	*al-Qawl al-ḥazm fī kalām ʿalā al-anbiyāʾ ūlī l-ʿazm*	Prophets before Muḥammad[645]
6	72ʳ–123ᵛ	*al-Rawḍa al-murabbaʿa fī sīrat al-khulafā l-arbaʿa*	First four caliphs[646]
7	124ʳ–143ʳ	*Nuzhat al-asāṭīn fī-man waliya Miṣr min al-salāṭīn*	Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers of Egypt[647]
8	144ʳ–150ʳ	*Mā l-sirr wa-l-ḥikma fī kawn al-khams ṣalawāt makhṣūṣa bi-hādhihi l-awqāt wa-bi-ʿadad al-rakaʿāt*	Ritual prayer
9	151ʳ–170ʳ	*Nuzhat al-albāb mukhtaṣar aʿjab al-ʿajāʾib*	Various religious subjects and special properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of things [originally written in Ottoman Turkish by a certain Maḥmūd b. Qāḍī Maynās, translated and abridged into Arabic by al-Malaṭī]
10	171ʳ–186ʳ	*al-Adhkār al-muhimmāt fī mawāḍiʿ wa-awqāt*	Prayers and religious formulas
11	187ʳ–190ᵛ	*al-Qawl al-mashūd fī tarjīḥ tashahhud Ibn Masʿūd*	*Tashahhud* part of the ritual prayer
12	191ʳ–193ᵛ	*al-Manfaʿa fī kawn al-wuḍūʾ makhṣūṣ bi-hādhihi l-aḍāʾ al-arbaʿa*	Ritual ablution[648]

644   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 52; and the bibliography for its edition.
645   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66; Suppl. ii, 52; and the bibliography for its edition under the title *Tārīkh al-anbiyāʾ al-akābir wa-bayān ūlī l-ʿazm minhum*.
646   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66.
647   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66; Suppl. ii, 52; and the bibliography for its edition.
648   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66; Suppl. ii, 52.

TABLE 3.3   Overview of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī li-ḥaḍrat mawlānā l-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī* (*cont.*)

Number	Folios	Title	Main topics
13	194ʳ–198ᵛ	*al-Zahr al-maqṭūf fī bayān makhārij al-ḥurūf*	Pronunciation of letters of the Arabic alphabet[649]
14	199ʳ–204ᵛ	*Najm al-shukr*	Astrology [originally in Ottoman Turkish,[650] translated into Arabic and abridged by al-Malaṭī]
15	205ʳ–208ʳ	*Kitāb al-Wuṣla fī masʾalat al-qibla*	Direction of prayer[651]
16	209ʳ–218ʳ	[Collection of poems, no independent title]	Religious poetry in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish

sulṭān al-aʿẓam);[652] he then listed al-Ghawrī's titles and the territories over which he was sovereign.[653] In the subsequent sections of the introduction, al-Malaṭī repeatedly used the title *al-sulṭān al-aʿẓam* to mark the beginning of a new passage praising a particular aspect of the sultan's reign, such as his military activities against European enemies, his measures to secure the sanctuaries of the Hijaz, and his treatment of wrongdoers.[654] The text continues with a discussion of the foreign dignitaries and the diplomatic embassies who visited the Mamluk ruler, then addresses the sultan's care for his military, his interest in music, and his construction projects.[655] Next it discusses the sultan's interest in the training of his slave soldiers and his eloquence in Turkic, Persian, and Arabic.[656] The following passage of the text focuses again on the origin of the work as a service on the part of al-Malaṭī, through which he sought his benefactor's ongoing favor (*tawassul*).[657] The introduction ends with the contents of the work and a supplication for al-Ghawrī.[658]

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649   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 66.

650   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 199ᵛ, gives the title of the original as *Şükr yıldızı*. It has not been possible to identify this work.

651   See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 52.

652   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 2ʳ.

653   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 34–5.

654   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 2ᵛ–4ʳ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 35.

655   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 4ʳ–9ʳ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 35–6.

656   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 9ʳ–10ʳ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 6.

657   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 10ᵛ–11ʳ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 37.

658   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 11ᵛ–13ᵛ; Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 37.

We should be careful not to read the introduction of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* as a neutral and factual account of al-Ghawrī's reign, as it is quite apparent that the text was written to solicit further support from the ruler. Nevertheless, the text includes information that we also find in other sources, such as Ibn Iyās' chronicle. For instance, al-Malaṭī, who wished to present the sultan as an exemplary ruler, and Ibn Iyās, who repeatedly criticized al-Ghawrī's tyranny and wrongdoings, concur that the sultan was a connoisseur of music.[659] If texts with such different agendas agree on certain points, we can assume that they share at least a partially similar understanding of events. Their statements can be checked against each other to further understand their authors' historical experiences. From this perspective, al-Malaṭī's undoubtedly biased account of al-Ghawrī's reign constitutes a highly relevant source on late Mamluk history.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that al-Malaṭī's concept of what characterizes a good ruler is notably different from that of Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn. While the latter used Quranic verses and prophetic traditions to draw the picture of al-Ghawrī as a ruler who fulfilled religious obligations and recommendations in an exemplary manner, such religious elements are notably absent from al-Malaṭī's introduction. Here, al-Ghawrī's intramundane acts and the respect other dignitaries and rulers accorded to him demonstrate his qualities as *al-sulṭān al-aʿẓam*. The two texts thus operate in clearly distinct fields of discourse.[660]

The physical features and the layout of the only known manuscript of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* attest to its courtly context and character. The manuscript not only features at its beginning an elaborate titlepiece in a typical Mamluk design, but also includes less lavish, but still professionally executed matching titlepieces at the beginning of each of the individual treatises it is comprised of. Gold was used freely in the titlepieces, the frame on the first double page of the manuscript, and for the dots subdividing the text. These features of the manuscript suggest that it was intended not for the personal library of a scholar, but as a presentation copy for a high-ranking patron such as Sultan al-Ghawrī. It obviously constituted a significant investment not only of cultural, but also of material capital for al-Malaṭī, who probably intended the manuscript as a physical token of his relationship of protection patronage with the ruler.

The contents of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* that follow the introduction bear witness to the areas of intellectual activity pursued in Sultan al-Ghawrī's

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659   See al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 7ᵛ; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.
660   Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 37–41, 44.

social environment. Many of the topics of al-Malaṭī's often short and apparently at least partially abbreviated treatises—such as Quranic exegesis, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, stories of earlier prophets, the history of the early caliphs and the sultans of Egypt—also appear in other contexts associated with al-Ghawrī, including most notably the latter's salons. While there is no evidence that al-Malaṭī ever took part in a *majlis* with the ruler, al-Malaṭī's scholarly interests closely matched those pursued there.

This is particularly clear in the case of the treatise *Nuzhat al-albāb mukhtaṣar aʿjab al-ʿajāʾib* (The diversion of gold necklaces: An epitome [of the work] 'The most marvelous of *mirabilia*') included in *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*. This work is an abridged translation of an Ottoman Turkish work on *mirabilia* (*ʿajāʾib*) by one Maḥmūd b. Qāḍī Maynās written for the Ottoman sultan Murād II (r. 824–48/1421–44 and 850–4/1446–51).[661] The translator arranged the text into five chapters (sg. *bāb*): the first includes questions and answers on various, mostly religious and legal, subjects, while the other four deal with the special properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of suras and verses from the Quran, prayers, and natural objects.[662]

Intriguingly, the topics in the question-and-answer section of the first chapter of *Nuzhat al-albāb* are very close to some of those discussed in al-Ghawrī's salons. Among the 29 questions in the text, eight are similar in content—though not in phrasing—to points raised in the sultan's *majālis*. These include the following problems: Is faith something acquired or something one is endowed with?[663] How can it happen that a man goes to the market and when he returns, his wife is married to someone else?[664] How can a man sell his own father?[665] How can two men be each other's maternal uncle?[666] How can two men be each other's paternal uncle?[667]

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661   Here al-Malaṭī most probably refers to one Muḥammad b. Qāḍī Maynās who lived in the time of Murād II and penned a work entitled *al-Gharāʾib wa-l-ʿajāʾib*, on which see Ṭaşköprīzāde, *al-Shaqāʾiq* 64. Ibn Qāḍī Maynās' work is not edited and no surviving manuscript could be located.

662   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 152ᵛ–153ᵛ.

663   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 153ᵛ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 125–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38. See also section 5.1.4.2 below.

664   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 155ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 209.

665   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 155ᵛ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 202–3.

666   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 155ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 36; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 236.

667   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 156ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 236–7.

These similarities demonstrate that interest in this particular kind of knowledge, which was often communicated in riddle-like form, was not an isolated phenomenon peculiar to the penultimate Mamluk ruler and his court society. Furthermore, it shows how closely al-Malaṭī's literary offering matched the intellectual interests of al-Ghawrī and his court. Moreover, the fact that *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* incorporates in *Nuzhat al-albāb* and another treatise two translations of Turkic texts points to the multilingual character of al-Ghawrī's court, as do al-Malaṭī's Ottoman Turkish and Arabic poems. Possibly, his inclusion of a short text on how to pronounce the letters of the Arabic alphabet should be understood against the same background.

Nevertheless, it must be clearly stated that *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* does not exhibit any direct connection to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. The text does not refer explicitly to the sultan's salons, nor does it claim to be based in any way on their proceedings. Furthermore, there is no evidence that al-Malaṭī ever attended one of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Finally, his text offers much less information on al-Ghawrī's court than *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and hence is not among the main sources of the present study.

The third literary offering has come down to us in a 339-folio manuscript, available today in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.[668] Its original decorative titlepiece is heavily damaged and seems to have been purposefully scratched off before an endowment note was added on top, specifying that the manuscript was to serve for the benefit of the students of al-Azhar.[669] This step destroyed nearly all the information about the work that the titlepiece might have provided. The only part of the titlepiece still clearly readable are the words *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* (The agreeable *majālis*), which was apparently part of the title of the work.[670] With the help of digital image processing,[671] it has been possible to reconstruct further parts of the titlepiece, including a word ending in the letters *ghayn-waw-rāʾ-yāʾ*. Given the contents of the work and the conventions of late Mamluk literary culture, this finding allows us to conclude that

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668 MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 5479. On the manuscript, see Arberry, *Handlist* vii, 139. My thanks go to Kristof D'hulster (Antwerp) for sharing information about this source with me.

669 For further endowment notes, see, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 12ʳ, 21ʳ, 30ʳ, 40ʳ, 50ʳ, 60ʳ, 130ʳ, 165ʳ, 173ʳ, 182ʳ, 190ʳ, 205ʳ, 212ʳ, 219ʳ, 227ʳ, 235ʳ, 252ʳ, 268ʳ, 280ʳ, 300ʳ, 307ʳ, 310ʳ, 319ʳ, 327ʳ, 334ʳ.

670 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 1ʳ.

671 I thank María Mercedes Tuya (Princeton) for her help in making lost parts of the titlepiece readable.

the work was dedicated to al-Ghawrī or that the manuscript was at least produced for his library.

The main body of the text is written in what Arberry described as "[g]ood scholar's naskh."[672] It lacks decorative elements beyond the use of red, green, and what might have been gold ink. Water has damaged parts of the manuscript, and marginal notes suggest that it saw scholarly use.[673] The flyleaf preceding the titlepiece is covered with text unrelated to the contents of the work and written by a different hand. It seems to have been recycled from another manuscript. Folios 140–145 feature a different paper, handwriting, and layout than the rest of the manuscript and were most likely added to replace lost or damaged folios. Furthermore, quires have gone missing between what is today counted as folios 11ᵛ and 12ʳ and folios 172ᵛ and 173ʳ, respectively. The text breaks off in mid-sentence after the last, heavily damaged folio of the manuscript. Its surviving parts are not dated, but internal evidence shows that it must have been produced after early Ramaḍān 912/mid-January 1507,[674] but before the end of al-Ghawrī's tenure and most probably not after 914/1508, given that al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh Yaʿqūb (r. 903–14/1497–1508) is referred to as the reigning caliph.[675]

As is typical for literary offerings, *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* integrates biographical information about al-Ghawrī into a broader framework. After a short *khuṭba*, the beginning of the text describes it as consisting of "agreeable *majālis*"[676] from the Prophet's biography, the stories of the prophets, and the histories of the rightly-guided caliphs, the Umayyads, the ʿAbbasids, the Fatimids, and *al-dawla al-turkiyya*,[677] that is, the Mamluk Sultanate.[678] As becomes clear throughout the work, here the term *majālis* does not refer to social events from which the contents of the text originate, but rather denotes the largest structural units of the text, as was not uncommon in Arabic literature of the middle period.[679] Apart from one passage discussed above,[680] there is absolutely no evidence that *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* was in any way connected to the courtly events of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[681]

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672   Arberry, *Handlist* vii, 139.
673   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 18ᵛ, 26ʳ, 98ᵛ.
674   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 333ᵛ.
675   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 159ʳ.
676   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 1ᵛ.
677   On this term, see van Steenbergen, Appearances 55–63; Yosef, Ethnic Origin 388–95, 397–8.
678   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ.
679   Cf. section 3.1.3.2 above.
680   Cf. section 3.1.5 above.
681   The same applies to the literary offering *al-Jawhar al-muḍīya fī l-masāʾil al-sulṭāniyya* (The

The first seventeen *majālis* of *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* deal with exegetical questions, the life of Muḥammad, the biographies of his prophetic predecessors, and related topics such as angelology.[682] Thereafter, the text discontinues the use of *majālis* as structural units in its discussion of the Prophet's later life from the establishment of the ritual prayer onward.[683] After describing the Prophet's funeral, a new section begins with a lengthy introductory statement in which the author states that he took up the examples of earlier scholars and collected information about the first generations of Muslims and later rulers to make them available for consultation and presentation.[684] He then continues with a sketch of the history of the caliphate from Abū Bakr to the tenure of his contemporary al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh Yaʿqūb.[685] The subsequent, incomplete section features material, based on *ḥadīth*s and older sources, about the excellent qualities (*faḍāʾil*) of Egypt.[686] This is followed by an account of the rulers of Egypt from the early caliphal governors to the late Mamluk sultans that makes up about one-third of the surviving text. For most rulers, the text provides only the most basic data, such as their names and years in office. A few selected figures are exceptions, namely, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (r. 254–70/868–84), who is understood as the first independent Muslim ruler of Egypt and the Mamluk sultans Baybars and Qāytbāy, all of whom are explicitly or implicitly presented as exemplary rulers worth emulating.[687]

The subsequent narrative of al-Ghawrī's reign, though incomplete, is, with 100 folios, almost as long as the account of all previous Muslim rulers of Egypt combined. The narrative lacks a readily discernible and clear-cut macro structure, but the following topical focuses can be distinguished: (1) al-Ghawrī's investiture, his personal qualities, and intellectual interests;[688] (2) the sultan's funeral complex, the relics preserved therein, its inauguration, and other events

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agreeable jewels on the sultanic questions) not analyzed here, which contains questions attributed to al-Ghawrī that are similar in character to those in *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*. As in the case of the latter text, however, it is clear that *al-Jawhar al-muḍīya*, which is preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1401, does not belong to the genre of courtly *majālis* works as defined in section 3.1.4 above, as it was not based on what was said and done in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. See on this work Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 172–3. I thank Kristof D'hulster (Antwerp) for sharing information about this text with me.

682   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 2ᵛ–126ᵛ.
683   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 126ᵛ–136ʳ.
684   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 296ʳ.
685   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 137ʳ–161ʳ.
686   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 161ʳ–172ᵛ.
687   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 173ʳ–280ʳ.
688   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 239ᵛ–250ᵛ.

related to it;[689] (3) further sultanic building projects with a focus on his park-*cum*-hippodrome (*maydān*), and related events;[690] (4) additional descriptions of the sultan's funeral complex;[691] (5) further sultanic building projects with a focus on the citadel;[692] and (6) al-Ghawrī's good deeds, particularly during the pilgrimage season of 911–2/1506–7.[693]

Al-Majālis al-marḍiyya is written in what is, to a significant extent, grammatically correct classical Arabic, includes numerous Quranic quotations, and a significant part of it is in rhymed prose and verses. It is replete with often very similar formulas of praise of and blessings for al-Ghawrī. The text portrays the sultan in a completely uncritical manner, as a divinely chosen ruler of outstanding personal qualities and merits. Moreover, it presents al-Ghawrī as the major driving force of history, given that most thematic units are introduced with the pharse "and his [al-Ghawrī's] noble command (*amruhu al-sharīf*) was issued that," which is followed by an account of the event in question.

The surviving parts of *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* do not offer any clear-cut information on the author's identity, but provide numerous helpful pieces of evidence.[694] Given his attention to the *faḍā'il* of Egypt, the author seems to have been a native of the area. Moreover, the respect he accords to Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī indicates that he belonged to the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*.[695] The contents of his work also suggest an interest in Quranic studies and recitation. Furthermore, the author is remarkably knowledgeable about the details of Mamluk official titulature. He exhibits a special interest in numbers, calendar dates, and measurements. His descriptions of the sultan's funeral complex and several events that took place there are extremely detailed and almost certainly based on personal observation. Moreover, his text includes noteworthy insights into the details of other construction projects of the sultan and the training of his *mamlūk*s.[696] The author apparently participated in numerous court events,

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689   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 251ʳ–270ᵛ.

690   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 270ᵛ–284ᵛ.

691   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 284ᵛ–293ʳ.

692   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 293ʳ–314ᵛ.

693   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 314ᵛ–339ᵛ.

694   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 263ᵛ–264ʳ, calls one Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Laythī, who served as a Quran reader in al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, "the poor servant of God Most High" (*al-faqīr ilā Allāh taʿālā*). This phrase typically precedes the author's name in Arabic works from the middle period. There are, however, no further indicators that this ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Laythī, who does not appear in other sources, was involved in the composition of the text. Therefore, for the time being, we cannot attribute the work to him with any certainty.

695   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 204ᵛ–205ʳ.

696   See section 4.1.2.4 below.

but seems to have been particularly knowledgeable about occasions related to al-Ghawrī's architectural undertakings. Most notably, he refers several times to the noble, that is, sultanic papers (*al-ṣaḥāyif al-sharīfa*) as a source of information.[697]

Taken together, these observations suggest that the author was most likely a member of the Egyptian bureaucracy. He was probably involved in the management of the sultan's building projects in general and his funeral complex in particular, or he at least had access to sources of administrative information about these projects. Moreover, he might have been involved in other administrative affairs, such as the training of the sultan's *mamlūk*s and the organization of the pilgrimage, or at the least, he had insider information about them. Likewise, it seems probable that he had an advanced educational background that provided him with insight into history and Quranic studies. He most probably produced his work to establish or maintain a relation of protective patronage with the sultan.

Given its particular background, *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* offers noteworthy insights into late Mamluk political culture from an administrative perspective and constitutes a particularly rich source on al-Ghawrī's construction projects[698] and efforts to protect the pilgrimage to Mecca.[699] Moreover, it provides helpful information on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*,[700] his learned interests,[701] and the poetic corpus attributed to him.[702] Finally, it is a rare testimony of how a historically-minded person with ties to the Mamluk administration integrated al-Ghawrī's reign into a decidedly Egyptian tradition of Muslim rule.

The fourth literary offering of interest is notably different from the texts introduced so far as its dedicatee is not al-Ghawrī, but Selīm Yavuz. Nevertheless, *al-Durr al-muṣān fī sīrat al-Muẓaffar Salīm Khān* (The well-protected pearls of the biography of the triumphant Khān Selīm) is relevant in the present context as it addresses Selīm's war with the Mamluk Sultanate in great detail. Its author, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ishbilī, also known as al-Lakhmī (d. after 923/1517), most probably lived in Damascus during the Ottoman conquest of Syria and composed his text shortly thereafter, in 923/1517.[703]

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697 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 292ʳ, 315ᵛ–316ʳ, 318ᵛ.

698 See sections 5.2.2 and 6.3.2 below.

699 See section 5.2.2 below.

700 See section 3.1.5 above.

701 See section 4.1.2.1 below.

702 See sections 3.2.7 and 4.1.2.4 below.

703 Holt, Offerings 13; Forrer, Handschriften 181 (for the dating). See also Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 128; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 272.

Al-Durr al-muṣān deals mainly with Selīm's successful campaigns against the Safawids and the Mamluks, and lavishly praises his military prowess.[704] In an almost complete reversal of al-Malaṭī's portrayal in *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, in al-Ishbilī's work, the Mamluk sultan and his followers appear as unjust villains who bring only harm and destruction to the lands they rule.[705] Thus, here we have a rare opportunity to see the counter-image of the Mamluks as presented by a contemporaneous author writing in Arabic. At the same time, the text provides insight into the political culture of the wider Islamicate world at the end of the Mamluk Sultanate. In addition, *al-Durr al-muṣān* offers information on the course of the Ottoman campaign against the Mamluk forces that supplements the data included in other sources.[706]

Another relevant text that falls outside the genre of narrowly defined literary offerings, but shares several of its characteristics, bears the simple title *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt wa-nawādir* (Collection of tales and anecdotes). Yehoshua Frenkel[707] first drew attention to this work, which is preserved in a unique, richly illuminated 61-folio manuscript held in the National Library of Israel.[708] A soldier named Yūnus al-Muḥammadī from the Ashrafiyya Barracks at the Cairo Citadel produced it, at some point, for al-Ghawrī's library.[709] Thus far, it has not been possible to establish whether al-Muḥammadī was also the author of the treatise, which should therefore be considered an anonymous work. The manuscript shares all the features described by Barbara Flemming as typical for manuscripts produced by slave soldiers for the sultan's library.[710] Moreover, the often incorrect placement of the vowel marks in the Arabic text suggests that the scribe was not a native Arabic speaker, as does the fact that he added Turkic glosses to Arabic phrases.[711]

Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt wa-nawādir, which lacks a proper introduction, consists of four parts: The first section features religious, devotional, and exegetical material, which is mainly presented in the form of short *ḥadīth*s.[712] Thereafter comes

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704   Holt, Offerings 13.

705   Holt, Offerings 13. See also al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 7.

706   Holt, Offerings 13. On the text, see also Holt, Ottoman Egypt 4; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 272; Tekindağ, Selim-nâmeler 219–20; Ernst, Tamhīd wa-muqaddima, in al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān*; Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 128–31.

707   Frenkel, Nations 71–2.

708   MS Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda Collection, Arab 294. On it, see Wust et al., *Catalogue* 448–9.

709   On *mamlūk*s from these barracks producing manuscripts, see Flemming, Activities 257.

710   Flemming, Activities 257–9. See also section 3.5 below.

711   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fol. 5ʳ.

712   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 1ʳ–28ʳ. See also fols. 36ʳ–37ʳ.

a part that comprises two allegorical tales (sg. *ḥikāya*),[713] which are in turn followed by a section of questions and answers on religious topics.[714] The fourth part contains two narratives on the famous Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī (d. 261/874–5) and the death of the Prophet Moses.[715]

The prophetic traditions and other textual units included in the first and longest section pertain mainly to four topics: (a) prayers and other good deeds that protect people from the torments of death and the afterlife;[716] (b) the prohibition of fleeing from the plague;[717] (c) the rewards promised to those who show forbearance (*ṣabr*), especially after the death of a son;[718] and (d) the delights awaiting martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*) in the afterlife.[719] Based on the contents of this section, we can assume that *Majmūʿ ḥikayāt wa-nawādir* was written in reaction to one of the recurrent plague outbreaks that took place in the Mamluk Sultanate from the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century onward.

Given the fact that the treatise was written for al-Ghawrī's library, it seems possible to further narrow the context of its production. In 910/1505, a daughter and son of the sultan fell victim to the plague in an outbreak that had an especially harsh effect on children.[720] During the particularly severe outbreak of 919/1513, members of the Mamluk elite were divided over the question of whether or not one should flee from the epidemic; the sultan decided to stay in the capital, rejecting advice that he should at least evacuate his son to a safe region.[721]

Against this background, it stands to reason that *Majmūʿ ḥikayāt wa-nawādir* was written as a reaction to the 910/1505 or the 919/1513 outbreak of the plague. The fact that it seeks to offer solace to parents of plague victims speaks in favor of the earlier date, whereas the fact that it addresses the question of fleeing from the plague fits better with what we know about the later outbreak. At any rate, it is clear that the religious traditions brought forth in the first section of *Majmūʿ ḥikayāt wa-nawādir* address concerns that must have been of primary importance to members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the sultan.

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713   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 28ʳ–30ᵛ.
714   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 30ᵛ–36ʳ.
715   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 37ᵛ–60ʳ. On this part, see also Frenkel, Nations 71–2.
716   E.g. Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 2ᵛ–4ᵛ, 22ᵛ–25ʳ.
717   E.g. Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 4ʳ–5ᵛ.
718   E.g. Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 10ᵛ–14ʳ.
719   E.g. Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 15ʳ–21ᵛ.
720   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 75–8. On the death of the sultan's son, see also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 47–8, (ed. ʿAzzām) 20–1.
721   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 296–9, 301.

The third section of the collection is also noteworthy as it features two questions and answers dealing with the Prophet Muḥammad's ascension to heaven (*miʿrāj*) and the status of the Prophet Jonah that vaguely resemble the type of discussions taking place in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. However, there is no basis on which to assume any direct connection between *Majmūʿ ḥikayāt wa-nawādir* and the *majālis*. Nevertheless, *Majmūʿ ḥikayāt wa-nawādir* is an informative source for scholarly and educational activities at the sultan's court.

3.2.4 *Mirrors-for-Princes*

Mirrors-for-princes, also known as works of advice literature (*naṣīḥa*), provide political elites with ethical and practical advice.[722] Works of this broadly philosophical genre[723] often consist largely of literary elements, such as aphorisms and anecdotes that relate them to the concept of *adab* discussed above.[724] These literary elements, which fulfill, inter alia, didactic, aesthetic, and illustrative functions, often stand next to accounts of the deeds of earlier rulers, *fiqh* rulings, Quranic verses, or *ḥadīth*s.[725] While the latter types of material give some mirrors-for-princes a decidedly Islamic character, others rely more heavily on non- and pre-Islamic, often Persian material.[726]

Often written in patronage contexts and dedicated to specific rulers,[727] mirrors-for-princes can serve as important sources on the history of court

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722 See Marlow, Surveying 525–6, 528; Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 984; Bosworth, Mirrors 527; Crone, *Thought* 149–50.

723 On the genre and its definition, see, e.g., Marlow, Surveying 524–6; Leder, Aspekte 122–8; Marlow, Advice; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 984; Bosworth, Mirrors 527–9.

724 Marlow, Surveying 525–6. On the connection to *adab*, see also, e.g., Marlow, Surveying 527, 532; Marlow, Advice; Leder, Aspekte 122; Bosworth, Administrative Literature 166; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 985–6; Bosworth, Mirrors 528; Rosenthal, *Thought* 68–71; Gutas, Wisdom 59–60. On anecdotes and other stories in mirrors-for-princes, see, e.g., Lambton, Mirrors 419; Leder, Aspekte 123; Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 984; Marlow, Advice; Rosenthal, *Thought* 69; von Hees, Guidance 373–4; and on aphorisms, see Crone, *Thought* 150.

725 Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 984; Marlow, Surveying 526.

726 Marlow, Surveying 527–8; Bosworth, Mirrors 527. On the connection between Islamicate mirrors-for-princes and Persian lore, see also, e.g., Lambton, Mirrors 419, 421–5; Leder, Aspekte 120, 127, 134–6; Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165–6; Bosworth, Mirrors 527–8; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 19; Lambton, Theory 95–9, 102, 119; Marlow, Advice; El Cheikch, Institutionalisation 352; Bosworth, Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk 984–7; Rosenthal, *Thought* 68–9, 75–7, 81; Crone, *Thought* 151; Gutas, Ethische Schriften 355–7; Lingwood, *Politics* 35–6; Melville, Image 346; Khalidi, *Thought* 197; Tor, Islamisation 117–8.

727 Marlow, Surveying 526–7. See also von Hees, Guidance 370.

life.[728] Yet, the vastness of this genre makes it necessary to limit ourselves to some of the most relevant works.[729] The present study deals with four representative specimens from the body of texts that we know were either produced for or later incorporated into al-Ghawrī's library.[730]

Muḥammad Ibn al-Aʿraj's (d. 925/1519) *Taḥrīr al-sulūk fī tadbīr al-mulūk* (Record of manners regarding the management of the affairs of rulers) is not only the longest, but also the best known of these texts and one of three available in print. Its author Abū Faḍl Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Qāhirī, known as Ibn al-Aʿraj, was trained in Shāfiʿī *fiqh* and worked as a professional copyist, scribe, and teacher of calligraphy.[731] He also appears in the endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's main *waqf*[732] as one of four *shuhūd* (legal witnesses) who confirmed its validity over the course of five days in 911/1505; this indicates that he was directly involved in one of the sultan's most important financial operations.[733]

The colophon of the unicum manuscript of *Taḥrīr al-sulūk fī tadbīr al-mulūk* that belonged to al-Ghawrī's library identifies Ibn al-Aʿraj as its copyist.[734] The work consists of four parts: The first section emphasizes the exalted character and the importance of the sultanate, then lists the duties of its holder. It outlines the reasons for the composition of *Taḥrīr al-sulūk*, its topics, and its structure.[735] The second section, called *muqaddima* (introduction), deals with the vices and virtues of rulers. It relies exclusively on ethical maxims, Qurʾanic verses, and *ḥadīth*s, avoiding the anecdotes about previous rulers that are common in similar works.[736] The middle section provides information on the

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728 Marlow, Surveying 528. See also Hillenbrand, Aspects 24; von Hees, Guidance, esp. 370.

729 See Leder, Aspekte 148–51, for the richness of this genre. On Mamluk mirrors-for-princes in particular, see Marlow, Advice. See also von Hees, Guidance.

730 Further mirror-for-princes from al-Ghawrī's library include the work *Tuḥfat al-mulūk wa-ʿumdat al-mamlūk* preserved in MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Fatih 3465, on which see Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 98–102; Yarbrough, *Friends* 173–4; and the work *al-Ṭarīq al-maslūk fī siyāsat al-mulūk* preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1608, on which see Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 258; Flemming, Activities 257; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 727.

731 ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 9–10. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 101, 141.

732 On this document, see section 3.2.6 below.

733 Ibrāhīm, al-Tawthīqāt 306, 311–2.

734 Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 61; ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 11–2, 15. There is evidence that Ibn al-Aʿraj copied also other works for the sultan's library, cf. Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 44; Christie, *Art* 66; Flemming, Activities 254.

735 Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 23–9.

736 Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 29–37.

juridical duties of rulers and furnishes detailed instructions on the administration of justice in *maẓālim* courts. Much of the material here originally comes from *Kitāb al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* (The book of the regulations of governance) by Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058).[737] The short final section takes up the juridical focus of the middle section and explains, inter alia, how rulers should dispense justice in cases involving violations of *sharīʿa* regulations.[738]

In its prologue especially, the work provides us with an example of the political thought of an author closely connected to the sultan, someone who was trained in *fiqh* and other relevant religious fields of knowledge. Moreover, it attests to the importance of al-Māwardī's teachings about *maẓālim* jurisdiction among al-Ghawrī's learned contemporaries.

The second work, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk ilā aḥsan al-sulūk* (Reminder for rulers about the best demeanor) is likewise preserved in a single manuscript[739] that was recently edited.[740] The scribe of this richly decorated manuscript produced for al-Ghawrī's *khizāna*[741] identifies himself in the colophon as a *mamlūk* by the name of Jāntamur min Urkmās al-Malikī al-Ashrafī from the al-Zimāmiyya Barracks.[742] Whether this slave soldier was also the author or compiler of the text is unclear. The editor of the text assumes otherwise and suggests, in light of its contents, that the text was the work of a judge in the military administration[743]—a hypothesis that, for the time being, cannot be rejected or corroborated.

The text consists of a brief introductory section, four main parts, and a short closing formula that is religious in nature. Following the introduction, in which the author gives the title of the work and outlines its structure,[744] the first part provides ethical advice for rulers.[745] The second main section discusses the

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737   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 37–57. On this section, see also Rapoport, Justice 96–7; and for Ibn al-Aʿraj's sources, see ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 14.

738   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 57–61.

739   MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3144.

740   I am grateful to Yehoshua Frenkel (Haifa) for making me aware of this text and providing me with a copy.

741   See for a codicological description Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 11–2. The features of this and the subsequently described manuscripts indicate that they belong to the group of manuscripts first described by Flemming, on which see section 3.5 below.

742   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 210–1. On these barracks, see Flemming, Activities 257.

743   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 10.

744   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 20–7.

745   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 26–73.

proper conduct of viziers,[746] while the third describes the proper behavior of judges.[747] The fourth part primarily addresses rulers and provides advice on how to keep one's army in good condition.[748] To convey his views, the author relies heavily on Islamic religious texts, historiographical material on the early Islamic period, and the Arabic literary heritage. He employs Quranic verses, *ḥadīth*s, and Arabic poetry to argue for his vision of proper political conduct[749] and illustrates norms of behavior through anecdotes about early Islamic figures such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his contemporaries.[750] References to non- and pre-Islamic authorities are completely absent.

Like the previously discussed text, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk ilā aḥsan al-sulūk* bears witness to discursive communication about rulership shaped by religious and juridical notions. Unlike *Taḥrīr al-sulūk*, however, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* focuses especially on the system of *qāḍī* courts, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of juridical thought in the context of al-Ghawrī's court. The concept of *maẓālim* jurisdiction is absent, and rulers are encouraged to ensure that *sharīʿa* regulations are obeyed.[751] Justice (*ʿadl*), however, remains the principle virtue of rulers.[752] Moreover, the strong focus on the army and—rather anachronistically—the vizierate sets the text apart from the other mirrors-for-princes discussed above and below. Remarkably, the text envisions rulers not as military leaders who gain glory in battle, but as chief administrators who take care of the material needs of their soldiers. Rather than fighting, rulers should read books and study the deeds of earlier leaders.[753]

The third mirror-for-princes bears the title *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān* (The book of the gift to man due to the merit of obeying the *imām* and the justice of performing good deeds) and is preserved in an unedited manuscript written for the sultan's library by the *mamlūk* Jānbardī min Dawlatbāy from the al-Ḥawsh Barracks.[754] It is unclear whether Jānbardī was the copyist or also the author of the work.

Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān begins with an unusually long *khuṭba* that focuses primarily on praising the Prophet Muḥam-

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746   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 73–101.
747   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 100–57.
748   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 157–209.
749   E.g., Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 28–31, 34–7, 50–5, 74–5, 78–9, 100–1, 196–7.
750   E.g., Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 39–41, 45–51, 59–69, 110–21, 144–9.
751   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 36–9.
752   E.g., Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 28–31, 34–7.
753   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 70–1.
754   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 1ʳ, 27ʳ. See Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 207, on MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 94.

mad, but also includes numerous references to earlier prophets and, toward its end, a long section on the merits of the four "rightly-guided" caliphs.[755] The main part of the text consists of short textual units that single out justice as the most important virtue in rulers. The majority of these units are either *ḥadīth*s emphasizing the eschatological value of just behavior or anecdotes about the justice of earlier Muslim rulers.[756] Moreover, the text contains two versions of the political maxim known as the "Circle of Justice,"[757] attributed to the pre-Islamic Persian king Khusraw (r. 531–79 CE, Ar. Kisrā)[758]—the only pre-Islamic Iranian figure appearing in the text—and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[759]

The attestation in *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān* to the currency of the Circle of Justice among members of the Mamluk military during al-Ghawrī's time is one of the features that makes it relevant for the present study. Moreover, it underscores the pivotal role of the concept of justice in the political thought of the period and illustrates late Mamluk interest in the prophets before Muḥammad.

The title of the fourth work relevant here is simply *Ādāb al-mulūk* (Rules of conduct for rulers).[760] It is preserved in the a 19-folio manuscript written by a *mamlūk* named Bardibak min Iṣbaʿ (?)[761] al-Malikī al-Ashrafī who belonged to the al-Mustajadda Barracks.[762] Again, we do not know whether this slave soldier authored or merely copied the work. The work was published in 1986 in an incomplete edition.[763]

Ādāb al-mulūk contains material mainly on the moral and ethical obligations of rulers. The structure of the work is rather simple: Its main part consists of eight sections, introduced by the phrase "and the ruler ought to ..." (*fa-yanbaghī lil-malik an ...*). The parts deal with the following topics: (1) God's

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755   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 1ᵛ–10ʳ. Cf. for the references to the earlier prophets fols. 2ʳ–3ᵛ, 5ᵛ; and to the "rightly-guided" caliphs fols. 6ʳ–8ᵛ.

756   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 10ᵛ–23ᵛ.

757   On this maxim, see Darling, *History*; and section 6.2.2 below.

758   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 17ʳ–17ᵛ.

759   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 17ᵛ–18ʳ.

760   On this work, see also Sadan, Division 259–60.

761   The reading of this part of the name was also unclear to Flemming, Activities 257; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk, simply leaves out the second part of the name.

762   See Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 727; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 259; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 1–2, 9, on MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 91. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 101.

763   Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk. Because the edition is incomplete, the present study references both the manuscript and the edition.

grace toward rulers,[764] (2) justice,[765] (3) benevolence toward one's subjects,[766] (4) learning about the rulers of the past,[767] (5) time management,[768] (6) military actions,[769] (7) control of officials and subordinates,[770] and (8) meetings with the pious and the ascetic.[771] In each section, Islamic material such as Quranic quotations, *ḥadīth*s, and references to exemplary Muslim rulers clearly predominate.

Like the other three mirrors-for-princes, *Ādāb al-mulūk* clearly focuses on Islamic material over pre-Islamic Persian lore. Moreover, like the other texts, *Ādāb al-mulūk* emphasizes the value of justice as the most important virtue in rulers. Furthermore, *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, like *Ādāb al-mulūk*, particularly emphasizes the lessons rulers can learn by "reading books about earlier [rulers] and being eager to hear their stories."[772] *Ādāb al-mulūk* also recommends that a ruler should dedicate a fixed amount of his time to "sitting (*julūs*) with scholars and learned men."[773] This statement helps us to better understand the background of the scholarly activities of al-Ghawrī's court society. Finally, it is noteworthy that *Ādāb al-mulūk* endorses the view that a ruler should not partake personally in warlike activities.

3.2.5   *Chancery Manuals*

The genre of *inshāʾ* literature, that is, works catering to the needs of government secretaries, scribes, and bureaucrats and providing them, inter alia, with information on letter writing, style, and administrative procedures provides further sources for the present study.[774] *Inshāʾ* literature reached "its pinnacle in terms of breadth, comprehensiveness, and scope"[775] in the Mamluk period with the monumental chancery manual *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* (The dawn of the night-blind on the chancery craft) completed in 814/1412 by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), who worked as a chancery clerk in the Mamluk administration in Cairo.[776] Building on numerous earlier

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764   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 2ʳ–3ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 6.

765   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 3ᵛ–10ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 6–7.

766   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 10ʳ–10ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

767   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 11ʳ–12ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

768   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 12ᵛ–13ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

769   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 13ᵛ–15ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

770   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 15ʳ–18ʳ. Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7–8.

771   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 18ʳ–19ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 8.

772   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fol. 11ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

773   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fol. 13ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

774   Veselý, Literatur 188–9.

775   Veselý, Literatur 198.

776   Cf. Bosworth, al-Ḳalqashandī 509–10. See also Veselý, Literatur 201; ʿAbd al-Rasūl, Kalima,

works including the most important early Mamluk chancery manuals,[777] al-Qalqashandī took an encyclopedic approach to the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for members of the chancery.[778]

For the present study, al-Qalqashandī's work is especially valuable as a source on the structure of the household of the Mamluk ruler, the military and civilian offices of the administration, court events, the political theory of the sultanate, and the titles and forms of address employed by the chancery.[779] However, given that al-Qalqashandī was very much interested in documenting the history of the chancery and its procedures from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad onward, much of his material is antiquarian in character.[780] Moreover, we have to keep in mind that al-Qalqashandī completed his work almost ninety years before the beginning of al-Ghawrī's tenure.[781]

The study at hand hence supplements al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ* with two later works.[782] Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl b. Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī's (d. 872/1467–8) *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik wa-bayān al-ṭuruq wa-l-masālik* (Quintessence of the report on the kingdoms and the explanation of the ways and procedures) is a book on the periphery of the genre of chancery manuals; it includes scant information on the art of letter writing. Yet, it features rich data on the geography of the Mamluk Sultanate, its system of rule and administration, the ruler's household, and the postal system used by the sultan. Al-Ẓāhirī based the work on his experiences as a high-ranking official of Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 842–57/1438–53).[783] Though of rather modest scope, al-Ẓāhirī's text is important as it updates information from al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ*.

The more comprehensive work, *al-Thaghr al-bāsim fī ṣināʿat al-kātib wa-l-kātim* (The smiling mouth on the craft of the scribe and the secretary) was completed in 846/1442–3 by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Saḥmāwī (d. 868/1464), a former official in Sultan Barsbāy's (r. 825–41/1422–38) chan-

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in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiv, 14–9; Broadbridge, Conventions 105–6; Bauden, Diplomatics 30–2; Mauder, Türen 327–8.

777   Cf. for al-Qalqashandī's sources, Veselý, Literatur 198–201; Björkman, *Beiträge* 75–86.

778   Veselý, Literatur 201; Björkman, *Beiträge* 75. On al-Qalqashandī's list of important books from various fields of learning referred to repeatedly below, see Wiet, Classiques.

779   Elements of al-Qalqashandī's description of the Mamluk court are discussed in Vermeulen, Aspects; Vermeulen, Tenue; Vermeulen, Note.

780   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 28. See also Potthast, Diplomatik 409, 443.

781   See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 28–9; Muslu, *Ottomans* 163.

782   The unpublished manual *Qalāʾid al-jumān* by al-Qalqashandī's son Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 876/1471) is preserved in MS London, British Library, OR. 3625, and was finished in 848/1464. On it, see Bauden, Father. It contains, almost exclusively, templates for letters and other documents and is of little relevance for the present study.

783   Gaulmier and Fahd, Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī 935; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 28.

cery.[784] Updating al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ* and other earlier manuals,[785] *al-Thaghr al-bāsim* is an excellent source on late Mamluk diplomatic protocol, the political system of the sultanate, the titles and forms of address in use among members of the court, the structure of the late Mamluk civilian and military administration, and the ceremonial aspects of late Mamluk court culture. This work is especially useful in the present context because, among all the complete published chancery manuals, this is the one closest in time to al-Ghawrī's reign.[786] Admittedly, practices and procedures that al-Saḥmāwī refers to as valid "in our time" (*fī zamāninā*)[787] might have undergone considerable change between the completion of his work and the time of al-Ghawrī's sultanate.[788] However, there is very clear evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's court considered al-Saḥmāwī's work relevant: During the sultan's reign, one of his *mamlūk*s by the name of Kasbāy min Aqbirdī from the al-Rafraf Barracks copied the first three chapters of the fifth part of *al-Thaghr al-bāsim*. These chapters deal with the sultan's symbols of rule and the structure of the military and civilian administration.[789] Kasbāy's work was published under the title *Kitāb fī Tardīb mamlakat al-diyār al-Miṣriyya wa-umarāʾihā wa-arkānihā wa-arbāb al-waẓāʾif* (Book on the organization of the kingdom of the districts of Egypt, its *amīr*s, its staff, and functionaries). There is no indication that Kasbāy updated the work and his version is, scribal mistakes and small elisions aside, identical to the edited text of *al-Thaghr al-bāsim*, including cross-references to parts he did not copy. Kasbāy's manuscript is lavishly decorated and was produced for the sultan's library, thus underscoring the value that readers at the sultan's court still ascribed to the contents of al-Saḥmāwī's *al-Thaghr al-bāsim*, even decades after its completion.[790]

Like all chancery manuals, *al-Thaghr al-bāsim* describes the working of the Mamluk governing apparatus not merely as it was, but also, to a certain degree, as it should have been in the mind of its author.[791] In general, chancery manuals provide idealized images frozen in time and offer only little information on the day to day realities of the working administration. Thus, it is of fundamental

784   Anas, Muqaddima, in al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 11–20; Bauden, Diplomatics 33.

785   Anas, Muqaddima, in al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 9, 27–8.

786   Muslu, Attempting 265.

787   Anas, Muqaddima, in al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr*, *passim*.

788   On how up to date the chancery manuals may have been, see Bauden, Diplomatics 29.

789   Corresponding to al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 379–414.

790   MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Quart. 1817. On the incomplete manuscript, see Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 259; and the edition al-Zāhī (ed.), Risāla, which fails to recognize the connection to al-Saḥmāwī's *al-Thaghr al-bāsim*. On its binding, see Ohta, Bindings 217.

791   Holt, Structure 52–3.

importance to counterbalance the information they offer with insights from works of other genres.

3.2.6 Documentary Sources

Waqf deeds (sg. *waqfiyya*) and related documents constitute one of the most important groups of surviving premodern documentary sources[792] in the Islamicate world.[793] Of the particularly rich collection of 888 preserved *waqf* documents in the archives of the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments cataloged by Muḥammad Amīn, 290 pertain to *waqf*s associated with Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.[794] The most comprehensive of these documents is a scroll with the shelf mark 883 *qadīm* featuring the original main endowment deed of the sultan's funeral complex in Cairo.[795] While today, *waqfiyya* 883 *qadīm* is inaccessible for reasons of manuscript conservation, we can rely on its copy, *waqfiyya* 882 *qadīm*, executed by the Ottoman judge Muḥammad b. Muḥyī l-Dīn Afandī b. Ilyās 76 years after the completion of the original deed.[796]

Since a detailed discussion of *waqfiyya* 882 *qadīm* is available elsewhere,[797] here we can limit ourselves to a short description of its five main parts. The introductory part presents al-Ghawrī as a ruler sent and supported by God to rectify the affairs of the community (*umma*) of Islam. Praising the ruler for his justice, it explains al-Ghawrī's reasons for establishing his endowment, and ends with the legal formulas necessary for the validity of the *waqf*.[798] The second part gives a very detailed description of the physical makeup of the buildings that form the endowed funeral complex.[799] The third part consists of lists of the landed properties and other sources of revenue dedicated to the upkeep of the *waqf*,[800] while the fourth part outlines the expenditures of the

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792   My understanding of "documentary sources" follows Görke and Hirschler, Introduction 11.

793   For documentary sources on al-Ghawrī's reign housed in European collections, see Bauden, Diplomatics 21, 23, 73–6, 81–4.

794   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 51.

795   On this *waqfiyya*, see also Amīn, *Fihrist* 263; 'Abd al-Mun'im, *Majmū'at al-Sulṭān* (partial reproduction); Ibrāhīm, al-Tawthīqāt, esp. 294–9, and for an edition of its notarization notes, see 342–60. Behrens-Abouseif, Change 89, dates it to 907/1501–2.

796   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 51. On this *waqfiyya*, see also Amīn, *Fihrist* 246; and for an edition of a short passage, see al-Miṣrī, Wathīqat taghyīr 11–2. I thank Akram Bishr (Göttingen) and Mahmoud Haggag (Osnabrück) for their invaluable assistance in accessing and copying the *waqfiyya*.

797   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 51–124. See also Petry, Fractionalized Estates 99; Petry, *Protectors* 9–10.

798   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 1–9. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 52–5.

799   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 9–37. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 55–84.

800   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 37–178. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 85–103.

waqf, focusing especially on the salaries, stipends, tasks, and qualifications of its staff.[801] The final part is dedicated to the rules for the administration of the endowment and its legal status.[802]

In terms of architectural, administrative, and economic history, *waqfiyya* 882 *qadīm* is one of the most intensively researched Mamluk documents.[803] The present study has little to add regarding these topics, but rather focuses on the introduction of the text, which has, thus far, largely escaped scholarly attention. It reads the first pages of the *waqfiyya* as a contribution to discourses about rulership and the religious status of the ruler, thereby agreeing with the view that Mamluk "documents may reflect political, ideological or other agendas."[804] In this sense, the introduction of the sultan's *waqfiyya*, which was written on his behalf and read aloud to him,[805] constitutes a particularly valuable source on how al-Ghawrī saw himself and, more importantly, wanted to be seen.

3.2.7   *Poems*

Hitherto, the corpus of Arabic poems attributed to Sultan al-Ghawrī has received only very limited scholarly attention. Although numerous studies mention that al-Ghawrī composed Arabic verses,[806] a short article by H.T. Norris is, as yet, the only publication in a Western language that discusses, in some detail, at least one of al-Ghawrī's Arabic poems.[807] The two available editions of parts of al-Ghawrī's Arabic poetry corpus published in an Arabic- and a Turkish-language journal, respectively, have gone largely unnoted by scholars writing in European languages.[808] In studying the considerable number of poems attributed to the sultan, the present study relies, in addition to these incomplete editions, on two unedited manuscripts.[809]

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801   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 178–221. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 103–18.

802   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 221–237. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 118–21.

803   See sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above.

804   Northrup, Explorations 12.

805   Ibrāhīm, al-Tawthīqāt 302.

806   See, e.g., Alhamzah, *Patronage* 43–4; Awad, Sultan 320–1; Flemming, Activities 253, 256–7; Eckmann, Literatur 300; Eckmann, Literature 311–2; D'hulster, Sitting 251; Hartmann, *Strophengedicht* 73–4, 231; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 76; Flemming, Perser 84; Dankoff, Review 303; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 30, 49–50.

807   Moreover, see the forthcoming article, Mauder, Legitimating.

808   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān; Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı.

809   In addition, Arabic verses by the sultan in the *majālis* texts; Norris' above-mentioned study; Mardam Bik, *al-Malik* 42–6; and the editions of his Ottoman Turkish *dīwān* (on which see below) are taken into account. A critical edition and systematic analysis of all Arabic poems attributed to al-Ghawrī, which would have to take into account also MS Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Cod. Arab. 280 preliminarily identified as an Arabic

MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 138 bears the title *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya wa-l-muwashshaḥāt al-sulṭāniyya al-Ghawriyya* (Divine *qaṣīda*s and *muwashshaḥ* poems of Sultan al-Ghawrī).[810] According to its title-piece, the codex of 30 folios was copied for al-Ghawrī's library.[811] As stated in the colophon of the manuscript, the large, clear, and almost fully voweled hand in which it was written belonged to a *mamlūk* named Shādbak min Azdamur from the al-Ḥawsh Barracks of the Cairo Citadel.[812]

Al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya wa-l-muwashshaḥāt al-sulṭāniyya al-Ghawriyya includes twenty poems; seventeen are in Arabic, one is in Ottoman Turkish,[813] and two are in a mixture of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish.[814] The poems are written in *muwashshaḥ* form and "belong to the poetry of His Noble Station (*naẓm al-maqām al-sharīf*),"[815] that is, Sultan al-Ghawrī. A headline in blue or red ink precedes each poem and indicates its respective *nagham* (melody), suggesting that the texts were intended to be performed musically.[816]

The poems are almost entirely religious in content and exhibit strong Sufi tendencies. They consist mostly of praise of God and pleas for His mercy and protection. In one case, the Prophet Muḥammad is singled out as the object of praise,[817] while the last three poems address the speaker's love of God.[818] Several verses point to the poet's identity: While the fourth poem refers to "our rule" (*mulkunā*),[819] the sixth poem states that God made the speaker ruler of Egypt,[820] with the 18th poem referring to his Circassian origin.[821] "(Al-)Ghawrī" appears as the poet's nom de plume (*makhlaṣ*) in all but the last poem, which is incomplete.[822]

Most poems in *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya* are also included in MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 2047. This anonymous man-

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dīwān attributed to al-Ghawrī, would go beyond the limits of the present study. D'hulster, Sitting 251, announces plans to address this desideratum.

810   On the manuscript, see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 339; Mauder, Legitimating.

811   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 1ʳ.

812   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 30ʳ. See also Flemming, Activities 256–7; Eckmann, Literatur 300; Eckmann, Literature 312.

813   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 27ᵛ–29ʳ.

814   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 20ᵛ–22ᵛ, 23ʳ–25ʳ.

815   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 1ᵛ.

816   On *nagham* in Mamluk music theory, see Wright, *Music* 109, 111–3, 115, 136, 151, 168.

817   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 18ᵛ–20ᵛ.

818   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 25ᵛ–27ᵛ, 27ᵛ–29ʳ, 29ʳ–29ᵛ.

819   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 6ʳ.

820   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 7ᵛ.

821   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 27ʳ.

822   For the missing lines of the poem, see Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 75ʳ–75ᵛ.

uscript of 84 folios in a *safīna* format bears the title *Majmūʿ mubārak fīhi adhkār wa-muwashshaḥāt lil-Sulṭān al-marḥūm al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāytbāy raḥmat Allāh ʿalayhi wa-li-mawlānā l-maqām al-sharīf Abū l-Naṣr Qānisawh al-Ghawrī* (Blessed collection which includes *dhikr*s and *muwashshaḥ* poems of the deceased Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāytbāy—may God's mercy be upon him—and of our lord the Noble Station Abū l-Naṣr Qānisawh al-Ghawrī).[823] The manuscript was written during al-Ghawrī's reign and consists of four parts: After a *khuṭba* and a short introduction, the first folios include formulas for the remembrance of God (sg. *dhikr*) by Sultan Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96).[824] The second section contains *muwashshaḥ* poems by the same writer,[825] while the third features 27 *muwashshaḥ* poems by al-Ghawrī.[826] The fourth section is made up of two poems of unknown authorship.[827]

Majmūʿ mubārak includes headlines in red ink for each poem; these headlines indicate its melody. Of the 27 fully voweled poems attributed to al-Ghawrī, 18 also appear in *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, including the Ottoman Turkish poem and the two mixed poems. In addition, *Majmūʿ mubārak* features seven Arabic and two Ottoman Turkish poems not found in the previously discussed collection. In terms of content, the poems in *Majmūʿ mubārak* are very similar to those of *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya* and share the religious themes of the latter. The pen name "(al-)Ghawrī" appears in all of them.

Shaʿbān Muḥammad Mursī's 1981 edition of what he refers to as al-Ghawrī's *dīwān* is apparently based on a microfilm of ᴍꜱ Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 138, that is, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya wa-l-muwashshaḥāt al-sulṭāniyya al-Ghawriyya* kept in the Maʿhad al-Makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya in Cairo[828] and another, untitled manuscript in the al-Azhar Library, Cairo.[829] The editor does not indicate which poem comes from which source. His edition includes fifteen *muwashshaḥ* poems included in Bağdat Köşkü 138,[830] all but two of which also appear in ᴍꜱ Ayasofya 2047.[831] Somewhat surprisingly, Mursī's edition leaves out five of the poems of ᴍꜱ Bağdat Köşkü 138,[832] ren-

823   On this manuscript, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

824   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 1ᵛ–9ʳ.

825   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 10ʳ–67ʳ.

826   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 68ʳ–82ʳ.

827   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 83ʳ–84ᵛ. On the manuscript, see also Zajączkowski, Poezje; Meriç, Guri'nin Şiirleri.

828   ᴍꜱ Cairo, Maʿhad al-Makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, 646 *adab* [non vidi].

829   ᴍꜱ Cairo, al-Azhar Library, 624, Abāẓa 7219 [non vidi].

830   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 152–69.

831   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 157, 167–9.

832   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 14ʳ–16ʳ, 18ᵛ–25ʳ, 27ᵛ–29ʳ.

dering it incomplete in relation to the aforementioned manuscript. However, Mursī provides the texts of six additional *muwashshaḥ* poems that are not included in MS Bağdat Köşkü 138,[833] two of which also appear in MS Ayasofya 2047.[834] In addition, Mursī's edition features twenty-eight *qaṣīda*s and shorter poems—referred to by the editor as *maqṭūʿa*s—that are not contained in the two manuscripts discussed so far.

All of the poems edited by Mursī are in Arabic. Their themes are very similar to that of the poems included in the two manuscripts just discussed: Religious themes including the subjects of mystical love and Sufi thought clearly predominate.[835] The pen name "al-Ghawrī" appears regularly, and several of the poems include references to aspects of al-Ghawrī's biography such as his military position,[836] his status as ruler,[837] and his Circassian origin.[838]

Another edition of what the editors claim to be al-Ghawrī's Arabic *dīwān* was published in 2012 by Orhan Yavuz and Mahmut Kafes, who seem to have been unaware of Mursī's earlier work. The 2012 publication features a short introduction, a facsimile edition of MS Istanbul, Millet Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ali Emîrî Effendi Bölümü Arabî 4369, and a Turkish translation of its contents. This 46-page manuscript was produced in 1325/1907 by the Ottoman historian Ali Emîrî (d. 1342/1924), based on unidentified sources. It includes two Arabic-Ottoman Turkish poems, one Ottoman Turkish poem, and twenty partially complete Arabic poems, most of which are in *muwashshaḥ* form; all use the pen name "al-Ghawrī" and deal with religious topics.[839] All but one of the Arabic-Ottoman Turkish poems,[840] the Ottoman Turkish poem,[841] and two of the Arabic poems[842] also appear in one or several of the previously discussed collections. Of the two otherwise unknown Arabic poems, one (contrary to the editors' statement) is definitely not by al-Ghawrī, but rather constitutes the first parts of Abū Bakr Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī's (d. 837/1434) famous *Taqdīm Abī Bakr* (Abū Bakr's preference).[843]

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833   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 170–5.

834   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 171, 175.

835   On the topics of the poems, see Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 105–13. The editor's discussion fails to recognize the religious character of the wine and love poetry.

836   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 117, 147.

837   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 127, 133, 147, 150, 159, 176.

838   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 167.

839   Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 67–8, 154.

840   Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 78–81.

841   Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 80–3.

842   Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 132–45, 146–7.

843   Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 132–45. Al-Ghawrī's library included a copy

Taken together, the available collections of al-Ghawrī's mostly Arabic poems are comprised of fifty-seven Arabic poems, three mixed Arabic-Ottoman Turkish poems, and four Ottoman Turkish poems; thus, they constitute a sizable corpus of almost exclusively religious poetry attributed to the sultan. Yet, can we consider these mostly Arabic poems sources from which to understand al-Ghawrī's religious thinking? In addition to the usual skepticism appropriate in the study of any premodern text, the fact that many former slave soldiers in the Mamluk Sultanate had only a very limited command of Arabic[844] counters the assumption that al-Ghawrī would have been interested in Arabic poetry or might even have composed a comprehensive corpus of verses in his own hand.[845] Thus, it seems possible that the Arabic poems in question were attributed to the sultan in an effort to present him as pious and well-versed, without the ruler having any role in their composition.

However, several arguments support the assumption that al-Ghawrī was indeed directly involved in writing these texts. Among these arguments, the explicit references in the texts to the speaker's status as ruler of Egypt and the inclusion of the *makhlaṣ* "(al-)Ghawrī" are of only limited persuasive value, as anyone could have added these elements to the poems. The same applies to the fact that the manuscripts explicitly identify the verses as written by al-Ghawrī. However, the existence of several only partially overlapping collections of poems associated with the sultan's name makes it unlikely that we are dealing with an isolated attempt to ascribe texts to the sultan that had nothing to do with him.

The contents of the poems conform with what we know about the literary history of the Islamicate middle period, during which the writing of religious poetry experienced a "creative growth."[846] Fulfilling both religious and aesthetic functions,[847] religious poetry typically included supplications for God's help and mercy,[848] devotional praise of the Prophet Muḥammad,[849] or expressions of the poet's love of his Creator.[850] We find all of these elements in

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of this work with commentary: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2341 [non vidi], on which see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 335.

844   Mauder, *Krieger* 158–61. See also Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 80–1; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 204–7.

845   Note, however, the case of a *mamlūk* who, although newly imported to the sultanate, was well-versed in Arabic poetry, discussed in Barker, *Merchandise* 166.

846   Homerin, Poetry 74.

847   Homerin, Poetry 81.

848   Homerin, Poetry 82.

849   Homerin, Poetry 83–6; Homerin, Reflections 66, 68, 71, 78–9. See also Irwin, Literature 10–2; Bauer, Literature 123–4.

850   Homerin, *Poet* 5, 11, 27–8, 31; Homerin, Poetry 80. See also Homerin, Reflections 71.

the poems attributed to Sultan al-Ghawrī, which thus constitute fairly typical products of the religious and literary context from which they claim to originate.

As for the form of the poems, the kind of strophic poetry known as *muwashshaḥ* that figures prominently in the corpus attributed to al-Ghawrī became one of the most popular forms of religious poetry in the middle period[851] and was widely used in the Mamluk realm.[852] Thus, it seems plausible that the sultan would use this form, too.

If al-Ghawrī was the writer of the poems under discussion, he found himself in good company, as many rulers of his time were known as authors of—especially religious—poetry. We have already referred to the verses of his indirect predecessor Qāytbāy included in *Majmūʿ mubārak*, together with al-Ghawrī's works.[853] Qāytbāy's literary production might have served as a model or a source of inspiration for al-Ghawrī's own literary efforts; the same might have been the case with Qāytbāy's son and successor Muḥammad, who was also known as a poet.[854] Other Islamicate rulers were active as poets, too. Al-Ghawrī's Ottoman adversary Selīm Yavuz wrote poetry,[855] as did, for example, Murād II, Meḥmed the Conqueror (r. 848–50/1444–6 and 854–86/1451–81), Bāyezīd II (r. 886–918/1481–1512), Süleymān the Magnificent (r. 926–74/1520–66), and Selīm II (r. 974–82/1566–74).[856] Further east, the Safawid Shāh Ismāʿīl, the Timurid Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 873–5/1469–70 and 875–911/1470–1506), the Mughal Bābur (r. 932–7/1526–30), the Āq Qoyunlu Yaʿqūb b. Uzun Ḥasan (r. 883–96/1478–90), and the Özbek Muḥammad Shaybānī Khān (r. 906–16/1500–10) also composed poetry, to name only some of the more famous examples.[857]

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851   Homerin Poetry 78, 82. See also Schoeler, Muwashshaḥ; Schoeler, Muwaššaḥ 444–7; Larkin, Poetry 195–6; Hartmann, *Strophengedicht*.

852   Larkin, Poetry 196, 201. See also Irwin, Literature 10, 13.

853   On Qāytbāy's poetry, see also Newhall, *Patronage* 77–8; Haarmann, Arabic 90; Irwin, Literature 6; İsen, Bilkan, and Durmuş, *Sultanların* 330–1; İnan (ed.), Dualar; Eckmann, Literature 309–10; Eckmann, Literatur 299; Mauder, Legitimating.

854   Haarmann, Arabic 90; Haarmann, Miṣr 175; Eckmann, Literature 310–1; Eckmann, Literatur 299; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, 93ʳ; İsen, Bilkan, and Durmuş, *Sultanların* 332.

855   Gibb, *History* ii, 261–2; Dankoff, Review 306. See also İsen, Bilkan and Durmuş, *Sultanların* 12–3, 87–91.

856   Schimmel, Cultural Activity 150–1. See also Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 39; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 44; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 32, 241; İsen, Bilkan, and Durmuş, *Sultanların* 10–5, 27–40, 73–86, 109–35.

857   Dankoff, Review 306; Schimmel, Cultural Activity 150–5. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22; Schimmel, Cultural Activity 150; İsen, Bilkan, and Durmuş, *Sultanların* 291, 311–22, 346–58, 383–91; Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 174; Allouche, *Origins* 153–6; Minorsky, Poetry; Gallagher, Poetry; Gronke, Courts 369.

Hence, we can speak of a tradition of rulers who wrote poetry, both within and beyond the Mamluk borders, and it is not unreasonable to propose that al-Ghawrī might well have participated in this trend.

At least five primary sources confirm, independently from one another, that contrary to what we might expect given his personal background, the former slave soldier al-Ghawrī had an advanced knowledge of Arabic. The least conclusive of these sources is the prologue of the Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme* commissioned by al-Ghawrī which states that texts in every language (*her dilce*) were read to the sultan.[858] Although the prologue does not explicitly state that Arabic was among these languages, we may assume that in a predominantly Arabic-speaking environment, the phrase "every language" also included this one.[859]

Much less ambiguous is a passage in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that portrays the sultan as claiming knowledge of Arabic (*ʿarabī*), Persian (*ʿajamī*), Turkic (*turkī*), Kurdish (*kurdī*), Circassian (*jarkasī*),[860] Armenian (*armanī*), Abkhaz (*awazah*), Ossetic (*asī*), and a language vocalized in the manuscript as *akhūkh* that can probably be identified with the northeast Caucasian language of Akhvakh spoken in what is today Dagestan.[861]

The next attestation of al-Ghawrī's language skills comes from an entirely different source: a Venetian diplomatic report. In the account of the embassy of the Venetian emissary Domenico Trevisan (d. 942/1535),[862] we read that the person who acted as an interpreter between al-Ghawrī and Trevisan translated the Venetian's words into Arabic so that the sultan could understand them.[863] Since Trevisan and his team served their government as experts on the eastern Mediterranean world, we can be certain that they could correctly identify the language used by the sultan's interpreter.

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858   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1990. See also D'hulster, Sitting 251. See section 3.3.2 below on this source.

859   On a similar passage in Gülşenī, *Menāqib* 328, that seems to confirm the existence of Arabic poems by al-Ghawrī, see D'hulster, Sitting 251; Sobernheim and Kafesoğlu, Kansu 164; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24. On this text in general, see section 5.1.2 below.

860   On the Circassian spoken in the Mamluk Sultanate, see Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 187–8.

861   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 257, (ed. ʿAzzām) 132–3; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22; D'hulster, Sitting 251 (for the translations "Abkhaz" and "Ossetic"). See also Irwin, Circassian 116; and for a somewhat different interpretation, see Yosef, Jewish Origin 79. Flemming and D'hulster accept al-Ghawrī's claims to know Arabic, Persian, and Turkic; this is also in line with the poetic corpus attributed to him. See Africanus, *History* iii, 888, on the fact that Circassian *mamlūk*s had to learn Arabic and Turkic.

862   On him, see section 3.4 below.

863   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 189.

Moroever, we have a passage in a historiographical text by Ibn Ṭūlūn which credits al-Ghawrī, at that time still an *amīr*, with translating the Arabic of the people of Damascus for his military superior who apparently did not know this language well.[864]

Finally, al-Malaṭī praises the sultan's Arabic in his *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* with the following words:

> The most magnificent sultan [...] who possesses an eloquent tongue and a strong heart, who generally imparts words of wisdom (*ḍārib* [...] *al-amthāl*) in what he says, be it during [special] occasions (*munāsabāt*), impromptu sessions (*maqāmāt*), conversations (*muḥāwarāt*), or [particular] situations (*aḥwāl*). He does this in three languages, namely Arabic, Turkic, and Persian.[865]

In contrast to this laudation of the sultan's language skills, the poems attributed to him exhibit a level of language corresponding to what can be expected from an amateur poet writing in a language that is not his mother tongue, a point that has been noted in earlier scholarship.[866] We may argue that the evaluation that these poems fall short of high literary standards speaks in favor of their authenticity.

Moreover, we know that al-Ghawrī was interested in poetry, as several sources confirm this. The sultan's library contained several works and collections of (mostly religious) Arabic poetry.[867] Moreover, the prologue of the Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme* states:

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864   Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 127.

865   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 9ᵛ–10ʳ.

866   Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 112; Hartmann, *Strophengedicht* 231.

867   E.g., several copies of Muḥammad al-Buṣīrī's (d. 696/1295) *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya* and related texts: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Revan 729 [non vidi] (see Flemming, Activities 258; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 317); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2413 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 314); and the MS without shelf mark [non vidi] mentioned in Christie, *Art* 66; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 101; at least two copies of Abū Maydān al-Tilimsānī's (d. after 598/1193) *al-Qaṣīda al-Istighfāriyya*: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 71 [non vidi] (see Flemming, Activities 258; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 242); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 398, fols. 1ᵛ–7ʳ [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 414); and at least two copies of Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Ūshī's (d. ca. 569/1173) *al-Qaṣīda al-Lāmiyya fī l-tawḥīd*: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1767 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 31; Flemming, Activities 258; Ohta, Bindings 217); MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi Ayasofya 1446, fols. 50ʳ–60ʳ [non vidi] (see Sobieroj, *Variance* 132–3, 160–2).

> There is no art in which he is not an expert.
> God has shown him the [right] way in every affair.
> He knows the arts of poetry (*şiʿr*) and of rhymed riddles (*muʿammā*)
>   well.[868]

The same work also states that the sultan composed poetry and singles out the praise of God and the Prophet Muḥammad as topics particularly dear to al-Ghawrī, just as we might expect in light of the Arabic poems described above:

> His *ġazel* compositions are searched for like pearls.
> He has praised the Prophet and professed the unity of the Creator
>   (*tevḥīd-i Bārī*),
> saying what is most excellent.[869]

Likewise, *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* repeatedly credits the sultan with the composition of *muwashshaḥ* poems and adds valuable information on their performative contexts by stating that young *mamlūk*s recited these texts at courtly occasions.[870] Moreover, in his biographical work, the historian al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651) includes a long Arabic *qaṣīda* that he attributes to al-Ghawrī.[871] Writing more than a century after the downfall of the Mamluk Sultanate, al-Ghazzī had no apparent reason to falsely attribute this poem to the penultimate Mamluk ruler.

In light of the available evidence, thus far, all the scholars who refer to al-Ghawrī's Arabic poetry unanimously accept its attribution to the sultan.[872] Yet, there is more than the mostly circumstantial evidence adduced so far to prove that al-Ghawrī was personally involved in the production of these poems. The most decisive evidence comes from an unedited and very short text entitled *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf ʿalā l-muwashshaḥ al-sharīf* (The elegant reviewer of the noble *muwashshaḥ*) written by the famous late Mamluk polymath Jalāl al-Dīn

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868 Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 16. On the sultan's interest in literature, see also, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, *Arts* 76; Petry, *Protectors* 11; section 4.1.2.1 below.

869 Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 16.

870 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 258ʳ, 277ʳ, 282ʳ, 302ʳ–302ᵛ.

871 Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 145–6. See also Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 122–4.

872 Alhamzah, *Patronage* 43–4; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 24; Awad, Sultan 320–1; Flemming, Activities 253, 256–7; Eckmann, Literatur 300; Eckmann, Literature 311–2; D'hulster, Sitting 251; Hartmann, *Strophengedicht* 73–4, 231; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22; Flemming, Perser 84; Norris, Aspects; Zajączkowski, Poezje; Dankoff, Review 303; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 30, 49–50; Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 103; Yavuz and Kafes (eds.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 67; al-Musawi, *Republic* 70; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 175–6.

al-Suyūṭī and preserved in the folios 7ʳ–10ʳ of a multi-text manuscript of the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Germany, with the shelf mark MS Orient. A 56.[873] After the *khuṭba*, al-Suyūṭī explains that the appointment of a ruler who protects the Muslim community counts among God's most graceful acts.[874] He continues with fourteen prophetic traditions exhorting rulers to be just toward their subjects and emphasizing that one must obey the sultan who is "God's shadow on Earth."[875]

Thereafter, al-Suyūṭī names his reasons for writing the small treatise:

> God was kind to the Muslims by appointing whom he had chosen to be in charge of them: [...] The guardian of the three sanctuaries Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, al-Sulṭān al-Ashraf Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī [...]. Among the rulers, nobody more knowledgeable than him has ever been seen [...]. Two *muwashshaḥ*s from his noble poetry (*min al-naẓm al-sharīf*) came to my knowledge—two *muwashshaḥ*s including [different] kinds of pearls and jewels, and entailing [various] types of wisdom (*ḥukm*) and *adab*. I wrote this commentary (*taʿlīq*) on them and called it *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf ʿalā l-muwashshaḥ al-sharīf*.[876]

Next, al-Suyūṭī quotes in full two poems by the sultan, poems that are also included in the collections discussed above.[877] Al-Suyūṭī then begins his commentary proper with the words "The best of this poetry is that to which Quranic verses and prophetic traditions point and on which there is a general consensus (*ijmāʿ*)."[878] He then comments on some aspects of the religious content of the poems and their support in Quran, *sunna*, and *ijmāʿ*.[879] The text closes with two versified supplications for the sultan.[880]

873 For a codicological description, see Pertsch, *Handschriften* iii.1 104–6; and on the work, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

874 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fol. 7ᵛ.

875 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fols. 7ᵛ–8ᵛ.

876 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fol. 8ᵛ.

877 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fols. 8ᵛ–9ʳ. The first poem is included in Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 75ʳ–75ᵛ; and partially included in al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 29ʳ–29ᵛ. The second poem is identical to the one in al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 10ᵛ–12ʳ; and Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 76ʳ–76ᵛ, with the exception of the first hemistich of the ninth line, which was left out by al-Suyūṭī or a later copyist. For the poems, see also Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 162, 169.

878 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fol. 9ʳ.

879 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fols. 9ʳ–10ʳ.

880 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf*, fol. 10ʳ.

It is plausible that al-Suyūṭī may have tried to gain al-Ghawrī's attention or possibly his patronage by writing this short treatise, which, among other elements, argues that the sultan could demand respect and obedience from his subjects based on religious principles. Brockelmann's assumption that al-Suyūṭī wrote the text to win the sultan's favor shortly after the latter's ascension to the throne is convincing, but unproven.[881]

Clearly, *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf* proves that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī considered Sultan al-Ghawrī the author of at least two of the poems in the collections of Arabic poetry attributed to the sultan. Given that al-Suyūṭī was not only a contemporary of the sultan, but also highly knowledgable about the intellectual and literary life of his time, there is no reason to doubt his judgment. Furthermore, given that al-Suyūṭī is not known to have been in close contact with al-Ghawrī, al-Suyūṭī's text suggests that poems attributed to al-Ghawrī circulated beyond the confines of the sultan's closest intimates.[882]

Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī (Biography of al-Suyūṭī, the most erudite) by al-Suyūṭī's student Muḥammad al-Dāwūdī al-Mālikī (d. 945/1539) firmly establishes the attribution of *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf* to the polymath al-Suyūṭī. In this work, preserved in a Berlin manuscript,[883] al-Dāwūdī lists *al-Munqiḥ al-ẓarīf* as a work of al-Suyūṭī and quotes it, almost in full, in a chapter about his teacher's poetic writings.[884] Moreover, al-Dāwūdī adds an interesting but unverified detail regarding the two poems by al-Ghawrī on which al-Suyūṭī commented. According to *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, al-Ghawrī wrote these poems "with the assistance of one of the litterateurs (*bi-iʿānat baʿḍ* […] *al-udabāʾ*) who used to come to him."[885] Al-Dāwūdī does not provide any further details on the nature and scope of the unnamed litterateur's assistance and is silent as to the source of this information, which does not appear in any other work, including the writings of his teacher al-Suyūṭī.[886] At any rate, he confirms that the texts

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881   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 24. See also al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* v, 187, Hartmann, *Strophengedicht* 74, 82.

882   We know, however, that with al-Suyūṭī's *al-Araj fī l-faraj* and his *al-Hayʾat al-saniyya fī l-hayʾat al-sunniyya*, at least two of the polymath's works were present in al-Ghawrī library: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 523 (see Flemming, Activities 258; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 284–5); MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 4205 (see Arberry, *Handlist* v, 65).

883   MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Wetzstein I 20. On this work, see Sartain, *Biography* 148–52; Mauder, Legitimating.

884   Al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 96ʳ–97ᵛ.

885   Al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 96ʳ–96ᵛ.

886   On the earlier case of a litterateur revising a sultan's verses, see Eychenne, *Liens* 181.

his teacher commented on "belonged to his [that is, al-Ghawrī's] *muwashshaḥ* poems that he had composed."[887]

Thus, the available sources clearly state that al-Ghawrī was directly involved in the composition of these poems, although it remains unclear whether and to what degree another unnamed writer assisted him. Yet, even if these poems are not exclusively the products of the sultan's pen, we can still consider these texts sources on the religious life and the intellectual horizon of the ruler and, indirectly, his court society. In particular, the poems include important information on the significance of Sufism for al-Ghawrī's religious outlook and the religious atmosphere of his court in general.[888]

3.3   Turkic Sources

In the late Mamluk period, writers, especially those associated with the military elite, used Ottoman Turkish and other Turkic language forms as literary languages, in addition to or as an alternative to Arabic.[889] The following sections introduce selected examples of such non-Arabic texts written in the Mamluk realm that include valuable data on al-Ghawrī's court. Moreover, they survey selected Turkic texts written beyond Mamluk borders that provide relevant information on the position of the Mamluk court in transregional communicative networks and on outsiders' perceptions of the late Mamluk court and its ruler.

3.3.1   *Poems*
In addition to his Arabic poems, al-Ghawrī also wrote Ottoman Turkish poems, some of which are *mulammaʿ*s, that is, poems combining alternating elements in different languages, in this case Ottoman Turkish and Persian or Arabic.[890] Unlike the Arabic texts, the sultan's Ottoman Turkish poems preserved in the illustrated manuscript Or. Oct. 3774 of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years and appear in two published editions.[891] The authenticity of these poems is unanimously accep-

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887   Al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fol. 96ʳ.

888   See section 5.1.2 below.

889   Irwin, Literature 3–6. See also Frenkel, Nations 67–70. It is unclear why Darling, *History* 122, states that "[t]he Mamluks generally minimized Turkish elements in their culture."

890   On *mulammaʿ* poems, see Virani, Literatures.

891   Cf. on the manuscript Götz, *Handschriften* 207–8; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 49–51. See the front cover for its titlepiece. See also Atıl, Painting 169–70; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 75;

ted in the scholarly literature. In light of this fact and given that almost all arguments adduced above for al-Ghawrī's authorship of his Arabic poems also apply, mutatis mutandis, to the sultan's Ottoman Turkish writings,[892] a lengthy discussion of their authenticity is unnecessary here. Moreover, it seems even more plausible that a Mamluk ruler would write Ottoman Turkish poems, as Turkic language forms served as the predominant lingua franca of the Mamluk military.[893] Furthermore, Ibn Iyās explicitly confirms that al-Ghawrī wrote Turkic language poetry.[894]

The Ottoman Turkish *dīwān* includes about 70 poems attributed to al-Ghawrī, mostly in *ghazal* form, that feature the sultan's *nisba* as *makhlaṣ* and are mainly written in an early form of Ottoman Turkish that still exhibits Old Anatolian features, but also contains Persian and Arabic elements.[895] Robert Dankoff characterized the literary quality of the poems as "competent but pedestrian, for the most part, and [they] would hardly be of much interest except that the poet was also a sultan."[896] Al-Ghawrī apparently composed several poems before his ascension to the sultanate, whereas others clearly date from the period of his reign.[897]

The above description of the contents of the sultan's Arabic poems also largely applies to his Ottoman Turkish compositions, which focus on the praise of God and the Prophet Muḥammad as well as on invocations for protection, mercy, and forgiveness. Often, the poems have a Sufi character. In comparison to the Arabic poems, al-Ghawrī employs often the topics of wine and love for religious reflections. Upon closer scrutiny, many of these love and wine poems are in fact *naẓīra*s, that is, poems that are counterparts to older texts written

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Flemming, Perser 91; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 22–3; Flemming, Gazel 341; section 6.3.4 below. The two editions are Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* (quoted throughout); Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı*. In addition to the *dīwān*, the present study also relies on the Ottoman Turkish poems in the collections of al-Ghawrī's Arabic poetry and the *majālis* texts, on which see Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı*, esp. 50–4, 153–6; Zajączkowski, Poezje, esp. 69–81; Eckmann, Literatur 300, Eckmann, Literature 311–2; Çiftçi, *Şairler* 154–6. On the poems, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

892   On these texts, see section 3.2.7 above.

893   On the Turkic language forms used by the Mamluk military, see, e.g., Eckmann, Literatur 297–8; Eckmann, Literature 305–7; Flemming, Activities 251; Flemming, Stand 1156; Irwin, Literature 3.

894   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 89.

895   Dankoff, Review 304; Flemming, Perser 91. See also Eckmann, Literatur 297; Eckmann, Literature 306; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23; Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 24, 54–7; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 52–3.

896   Dankoff, Review 306.

897   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 53.

by poets from the ninth/fifteenth century whose works were regarded, in al-Ghawrī's time, as part of the literary canon that well-versed Ottoman Turkish-speakers had to know. Typically, in the manuscript of al-Ghawrī's *dīwān*, these canonized poems precede the sultan's own poetry which adopts their content, rhyme, and metric structure.[898] By writing *naẓīra*s, the sultan participated in a widespread practice in late middle and early modern Ottoman Turkish literature, in which a poet sought to demonstrate his familiarity with other poets and that his own skills equaled those of earlier writers.[899]

The Ottoman Turkish texts not only allow us direct insight into the sultan's religious thought, cultural interests, scholarly horizons, and literary activities; they also demonstrate that the sultan did not pen his verses in an intellectual and literary vacuum, rather, he was well aware of the works of other poets of his time.[900]

3.3.2 *Translations and Commentaries*

Some of the most important Turkic sources that shed light on al-Ghawrī's court are translations of or commentaries on works in other languages. The most prominent among these is *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, which constitutes the oldest known complete versified Turkic translation of Abū l-Qāsim al-Firdawsī's (d. 416/1025) monumental Persian *Shāhnāme*. It was commissioned by al-Ghawrī and composed between 906/1501 and 916/1511.[901] The immense work fills four volumes in the modern edition of its autograph manuscript,[902] which was richly illustrated and composed in an early form of Ottoman Turkish.[903] It consists of a prologue (vv. 1–525), the sometimes rather loose translation itself

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898   Dankoff, Review 304. Dankoff seems to interpret the wine and love poems as bearing no religious significance. On the *naẓīra*s, see also D'hulster, Sitting 252; Flemming, Perser 85, 91; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23; Flemming, Activities 253; Flemming, Gazel 335–40; Mauder, Legitimating; and section 4.1.2.1 below.

899   Ambros, Turks 719.

900   On the last mentioned point, see also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23. For a more critical assessment of the *dīwān*'s source value, see Petry, *Protectors* 11.

901   D'hulster, Sitting 230, 240–2. See also Flemming, Perser 85–6, 89; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 10; Schmidt, Reception 129.

902   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi*. Also note the older partial facsimile edition in Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja*. On the manuscript MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1519 [non vidi], see Karatay, *Türkçe yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 58–9; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 8–10; Zajączkowski, Traduction 54–5; Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, xx–xxi.

903   D'hulster, Sitting 232–3. See also Flemming, Stand 1163; Atasoy, Manuscrit 151; Atasoy, Minyatürleri 49; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 15–6, 21; Zajączkowski, Traduction 57, 61–3; Zajączkowski, Deylimler; Eckmann, Literature 306; Eckmann, Literatur 297–8.

(vv. 526–55657), and an epilogue (vv. 55638–56505). The prologue includes passages on the reasons the Persian text was translated into versified Turkish (vv. 231–71), on Sultan al-Ghawrī's merits (vv. 326–422), and on the motives behind the composition of the work (vv. 423–525). The epilogue features material on Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030) as the patron of the composition of the original *Shāhnāme* (vv. 55658–56048), the translator (vv. 56049–56149), al-Ghawrī's *majāli*s (56150–56191), his praiseworthy qualities (vv. 56205–56243), and his building activities (vv. 56244–56494).[904]

The little information we have about the translator of the work, one Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Sharīf, suggests that he was a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, wrote Turkic poetry, and might have originated from Āmid/Diyarbakır in southeastern Anatolia.[905] Moreover, the translator has been identified with a certain Sharīf known as al-Shaykh Ḥusayn mentioned by Ibn Iyās.[906] Al-Ghawrī appointed this person, who knew Persian and was of non-Arab origin, to the post of *shaykh* at the al-Muʾayyad Mosque in 908/1503.[907] The person who occupied this position supervised the Sufi students attached to the institution and functioned as its professor of Ḥanafī *fiqh*. With a monthly income of 550 half *dirham*s, he was the best paid employee of the complex.[908] Al-Sharīf held this post at least until 922/1516, after which we do not have any reliable information about him.[909]

Earlier scholarship has suggested that the translator of the *Shāhnāme* and the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* were relatives—possibly uncle and nephew—and pointed to the similarity of the names of these two people, the fact that the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was not a native Arabic speaker, the presence of a description of the sultan's *majālis* in the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*,[910] and the observation that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions the translation.[911]

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904 D'hulster, Sitting 233–5; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 11, 17–20; Zajączkowski, Traduction 55–6, 58–60. See also Awad, Sultan 322; Mardam Bik, *al-Malik* 47; ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 46–7.

905 D'hulster, Sitting 235–8; Flemming, Perser 90. See also Flemming, Perser 81–2; Dankoff, Review 305–6; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Wersja* 7; Zajączkowski, Traduction 53, 57–8; ʿAzzām (ed.), *Majālis* 45–6; Schmidt, Reception 129.

906 D'hulster, Sitting 238; Flemming, Perser 85–87; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 77.

907 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 54, 221. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 135.

908 Popper, *Notes* ii, 120–1.

909 D'hulster, Sitting 238; Flemming, Perser 87, 90–91.

910 Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1990–2.

911 D'hulster, Sitting 239–40. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24.

The prologue and epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* include information on the intellectual and artistic activities at al-Ghawrī's court in general and the sultan's *majālis* in particular that are valuable for the present study.[912] Moreover, the translation constitutes, in itself, an important witness of how the transregional court culture of the Islamicate world shaped Mamluk court life in the tenth/sixteenth century.[913] Finally, the richly illustrated autograph manuscript of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* contains sixty-two miniatures that constitute first-rate evidence for the flowering of the book arts at al-Ghawrī's court.[914]

The second text of interest here is known by the Arabic title *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa min kalām amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib* (One hundred sayings on various [fields of] wisdom from the words of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib).[915] Contrary to what the title suggests, this work consists of ninety-eight short ethical aphorisms attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; for example, "Gluttony brings together the worst vices,"[916] or "[One's] *adab* is an illustration of [one's] intelligence."[917] The text gives each of the aphorisms first in the original Arabic, followed by a versified commentary that paraphrases the aphorism in Persian and Ottoman Turkish with Old Anatolian features.[918] This use of three languages in the same text notwithstanding, it seems appropriate to categorize the work as a Turkic source, given that together, the Turkic commentaries form the most sizable part of the text.

Several sources attribute the original Arabic collection of sayings to the eminent literary figure al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9).[919] Its Persian commentary was written by Rashīd al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Jalīl al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 578/1182).[920] The authorship of the Ottoman Turkish commentary is unclear, but it seems possible that it was the work of a *mamlūk* named Manṣūr b. Yūsuf al-Malikī al-Ashrafī, as the colophon of the only known manuscript identifies him as its scribe.[921] The

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912   See sections 4.1 and 6.3.1 below.

913   See section 4.2.5 below.

914   See section 6.3.4 below. On the miniatures, see Atasoy, Minyatürleri 49–69; Atasoy, Manuscrit 152–8; Atıl, Painting 163–9; Atıl, *Renaissance* 253, 264–5; Mostafa, Paintings 11–2.

915   I am grateful to Kristof D'hulster (Antwerp) for making me aware of this work and providing me with a copy.

916   Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 35.

917   Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 36.

918   On the Arabic and Persian parts, see Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 7–9, and on the Turkic parts Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 9–11, 14–6.

919   Qutbuddin (ed. and trans.), *Treasury* xxii–xxiii.

920   Qutbuddin (ed. and trans.), *Treasury* xxix–xxx. See also Fleischer (ed. and trans.), *Sprüche* iii–iv.

921   Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 46.

manuscript is preserved today in Istanbul[922] and has been edited by Ananiasz Zajączkowski. Its lavish decoration and other codicological features leave no doubt that the manuscript belonged to a distinct group of manuscripts written by slave soldiers for the sultan's library.[923]

Mi'at kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa is of special interest for the present study for at least three reasons: It demonstrates the prominence of multilingual literary production at al-Ghawrī's court,[924] it illustrates the significance of wisdom literature in intellectual life during the time of al-Ghawrī,[925] and it is evidence of the respect that members of the court society accorded to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[926]

The third relevant text was composed by one Shīrvānlı Haṭiboğlu Ḥabībullāh under the title *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı* (An address to the sultan: A pilgrimage book). Written in a versified form of a Turkic language that its editor identifies as Old Anatolian or Old Oghuz Turkic,[927] it consists of an introduction and three main parts. It is preserved in a unique autograph manuscript produced for al-Ghawrī's library in 918/1512[928] and located today in Istanbul.[929]

The first and longest main part of the work contains an annotated collection of the ninety-nine names of God. Each name is first quoted in Arabic and then commented on in versified Turkic with a focus on its special qualities (*khawāṣṣ*).[930] The second main part comprises forty mostly ethical and edifying *ḥadīth*s; these are given without chains of transmitters, first in Arabic and then in paraphrased, versified translation. The editor assumes that the translation is at least partially based on an earlier Persian version.[931] The third main part features a translation of ninety-one sayings attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, all but two[932] of which are also included in the previously discussed collection of ʿAlī's sayings, albeit in a slightly different order. This indicates that Haṭiboğlu's translation was based on a different *Vorlage* than the previously examined

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922 MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köṣkü 122. For a codicological description, see Zajączkowski (ed.), *Sentencyj* 11–4.

923 See section 3.5 below. See also Flemming, Activities 258.

924 See section 6.3.4 below.

925 See section 4.2.8 below.

926 See section 5.1.3 below.

927 Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 333–4.

928 Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 326.

929 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 1860 [non vidi].

930 On this part, see Ceyhan (ed.), Esmâ-i Hüsnâ 18–21; Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 329; Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 56–7.

931 Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 57; Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 330–1; Ceyhan (ed.), Esmâ-i Hüsnâ 22.

932 Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 347 (no. 59), 353 (no. 91).

version.[933] Each of the sayings is first given in Arabic and then translated into versified Turkic. The translations are far from literal and include extended paraphrases and comments.[934]

Very little is known about the author of the work, Shīrvānlı Ḥaṭiboğlu Ḥabībullāh, apart from his floruit as indicated by the manuscript. His name suggests that he originated from the region of Shirvan in what is today the Republic of Azerbaijan—a territory the Safawids conquered in 906/1500.[935] Having migrated to Cairo, possibly in reaction to the political turmoil in his homeland, he probably sought to become a client of al-Ghawrī, for whom he produced his work and whom he praises at length in its introduction.[936] Given its title, it is possible that Ḥaṭiboğlu either wrote the work as a pilgrim or to gain al-Ghawrī's support for a future pilgrimage to Mecca.[937]

Having received attention so far primarily as a specimen of early Turkic language religious literature, *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı* also tells us that members of al-Ghawrī's court were interested in *ḥadīth*s,[938] ethical maxims,[939] and material attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[940] Moreover, what we know about the origin of *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı* underlines the attractiveness of al-Ghawrī's court for learned men from outside the Mamluk realm[941] and its importance as a center of multilingual literary production.[942]

3.3.3   *Ottoman Historiographical and Chancery Sources*

Multiple historiographical works in Ottoman Turkish deal with the relations between the Ottoman and the Mamluk Sultanates, including the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria and the integration of these lands into the Ottoman Empire. However, since these works typically provide only very limited information about the internal politics of the Mamluk Sultanate, let alone the cultural, religious, and intellectual history of its court, the present study takes into account only a limited selection of Ottoman historiographical works.[943]

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933   See Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 332–3, for an attempt to identify Ḥaṭiboğlu's *Vorlage*.

934   On the text, see also Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 331–4; Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 58–9; Ceyhan (ed.), Esmâ-i Hüsnâ 23.

935   Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 325–7.

936   Ceyhan (ed.), Yüz söz 327–8. On Ḥaṭiboğlu's biography, see also Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 55–6; Ceyhan (ed.), Esmâ-i Hüsnâ 15–8.

937   See also Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 56.

938   See section 4.2.6 below.

939   See section 4.2.7 below.

940   See section 5.1.3 below.

941   See section 4.1.2.3 below.

942   See sections 4.4 and 6.3.4 below.

943   Only works available to me in full in printed editions or easily accessible manuscripts and

The first group of sources used here are the so-called *Selīm-nāme* (Book of Selīm)[944] works by Celāl-zāde Muṣṭafā Çelebi (d. 975/1567)[945] and Şükrī-i Bitlisī (d. in or after 928/1521–2)[946] which deal with the history of the reign of Sultan Selīm and provide information on the Dhū l-Ghādir crisis and the subsequent campaign against the Mamluks. In addition, Ottoman historiographical works with a broader scope, with the title *Tevārīḫ-i Āl-i ʿOs̱mān* (History of the Ottoman dynasty) such as those by Luṭfī Paşa (d. 971/1564),[947] Ḥadīdī (d. after 930/1523),[948] and Maṭrakçı Naṣūḥ (d. probably 971/1564)[949] offer relevant material on the same topics, as well as information on diplomatic relations between al-Ghawrī and his Ottoman peer Bāyezīd II and on the Ottoman prince Qurqud's trip to Egypt.

The voluminous *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* (Writings of sultans) by the administrative official Aḥmed Ferīdūn Bey (d. 991/1583) is not primarily a historiographical text, but a chancery work that encompasses several hundred diplomatic letters, decrees, declarations of conquest, treaties, and other documents, and includes multiple texts pertinent to Mamluk-Ottoman relations.[950] Among these are works of special importance here,[951] including, for example, several letters in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic exchanged between al-Ghawrī and Ottoman sultans,[952] reports and diaries of the Ottoman campaigns against the Dhū l-Ghādir

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known to include relevant information on Mamluk-Ottoman relations during al-Ghawrī's reign not found elsewhere are included.

944 On this genre, see now Çıpa, *Making* 130–1, 140–75.

945 On him and his work, see Uğur, *Reign* 14–5; Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 102–3; Kerslake, Source 40–51; Uğur and Çuhadar, Celal-zâde, in Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 9–10; Tekindağ, Selim-nâmeler 210–2; Ménage, Djalālzāde.

946 On him and his work, see Uğur, *Reign* 16–7; Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 51–2; Jansky, Eroberung 174; Argunşah, Giriş, in Şükrî-i Bitlisî, *Selîm-nâme* 3–19; Tekindağ, Selim-nâmeler 215–6.

947 On him and his work, see Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 79–81; Imber, Luṭfī Pasha 837; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 265–6.

948 On him and his work, see Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 59–60; Uğur, *Reign* 19; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 265–6; Öztürk, Giriş, in Hadîdî, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman* xxvii–liii; Ménage, Ḥadīdī.

949 On him and his work, see Woodhead, Rüstem Pasha 641; Yurdaydin, Maṭrakčı; Taeschner, Naṣūḥ. The present study uses the MS Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Mixt. 339; on which see Flügel, *Handschriften* ii, 233–4.

950 On this author and his work, see Mordtmann and Ménage, Ferīdūn Beg 881; Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 106–7; Holter, Studien 429–36; Muslu, *Ottomans* 32–3; Bauden, Diplomatics 40–1; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 278–9.

951 See also Winter, Occupation 491; Holter, Studien 429.

952 Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşeʾāt üs-selāṭīn* i, 347–350, 354–6, 411–3, 419–27. For an additional letter, see Edhem (ed.), Bir veṣīḳa.

principality and the Mamluk Sultanate,[953] as well as declarations of conquest (sg. *fetiḥnāme*) and letters of congratulation pertaining to these military conflicts.[954]

3.4 Sources in European Languages

Most of the sources originally produced in European languages that are analyzed in this study are accounts of diplomats, pilgrims, and religious officials who spent limited periods of time in the Mamluk Sultanate. In writing of their experiences, these men took note of many observations that were noteworthy to them, but which local authors would have considered too mundane and trivial to record. Although the accounts of European travelers often lack deeper insight into the inner dynamics of what were foreign societies to them, they provide valuable information on daily life. In this sense, these accounts, discussed here in chronological order according to the times their authors' sojourns in the Mamluk realm ended, are important supplementary sources.[955]

Our first author, Petrus Martyr Anglerius, was born in 861/1457 in Arona in what is today northern Italy and in 907/1501 traveled to Egypt as emissary of Isabella I of Castile (r. 879–910/1474–1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 879–910/1475–1504). After his return in the following year, he was appointed abbot-bishop of Seville, Jamaica, and died in Granada in 932–3/1526.[956] His widely read[957] work *Legatio Babylonica* (The Babylonian[958] embassy), completed in Ramaḍān 907/April 1502 and written in "the polished Latin [...] of

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953 Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşe'āt üs-selāṭīn* 407–9, 450–500. On the diaries of the Mamluk-Ottoman war, see Jansky, Eroberung 175; Jansky, Chronik 30; Babinger, *Geschichtsschreiber* 50; Lellouch, *Ottomans* 278; and for a partial German translation of one of them Edhem (trans.), *Tagebuch*.

954 Ferīdūn Bey, *Münşe'āt üs-selāṭīn* 409–10, 427–45.

955 Mauder, Review of *Legatio* 203. On the value of travelogues in Mamluk studies, see also Haarmann, System, esp. 4, 22–4; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 12; Irwin, Eyes 49; Haarmann, Review of *Protectors* 270; Dekkiche, Diplomacy 130.

956 Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 25–9, 34–41, 48. The information provided by Todt is summarized in Mauder, Review of *Legatio* 204.

957 On the various editions and translations of the text, see Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 122–57. The present study uses the most recent new edition and translation of the text published by Todt, on which, see Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 1–3, 158–60; Mauder, Review of *Legatio*.

958 Petrus Martir considers "Babylon" the name of a part of the city of Cairo, cf. Wijntjes, Visit 559. A settlement bearing this name existed in the Roman period in what is today known as Old Cairo, cf. Becker, Bābalyūn.

a highly-educated humanist,"[959] provides an account of the first months of his diplomatic mission to al-Ghawrī,[960] which was sent to establish friendly relations with the Mamluks and prevent them from reprisals against Christians in reaction to the forced mass conversions and displacements of Muslims after the conquest of Granada.[961] In his account, Martyr includes thorough descriptions of the places he visited and the people he met. Although he spent less than a month in Cairo, the fact that he had direct access to the Mamluk court makes *Legatio Babylonica* a valuable source for the study at hand.[962]

Ludovico de Varthema's reasons for traveling to the Near East were notably different than those of Petrus Martyr. Probably born in Bologna around 874–5/1470, he sailed in 906–7/1501 from Venice to Alexandria and traveled from there most likely to Syria, where he converted to Islam and joined the Mamluk military. In 908/1503, he was part of the Mamluk forces that escorted the pilgrimage caravan to the Hijaz. According to his preserved writings, he left the Mamluk military while in the Arabian Peninsula, traveled to Yemen, and eventually, in 911/1506, joined the Portuguese forces operating in the Indian Ocean before returning to Europe in 913–4/1508. De Varthema died in Rome, possibly in 931–2/1525.[963] As a member of the Mamluk military fluent in Arabic,[964] de Varthema had access to places and sources of information beyond the reach of other European writers. The parts of his *Itinerariro de Ludouico de Varthema bolognese* (Itinerary of Ludovico de Varthema of Bologna), published in 1510, that describe his travel to and sojourn at the Islamic sanctuaries[965] and the everyday life of Mamluk garrison forces in Syria[966] are of special importance for the present study.[967]

Unlike de Varthema, Martin Baumgarten in Breitenbach visited the Near East as a Christian pilgrim. Born in 878/1473 in Kufstein, Tyrol, into a wealthy family, Baumgarten embarked on a military career. From 912/1507 to 914/1508, he undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Mt. Sinai. After his return, Baum-

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959   Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 1.

960   On the contents of the work, see Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 49–51; summarized in Mauder, Review of *Legatio* 204–5.

961   Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 49, 53–6. See also Mauder, Review of *Legatio* 204–5.

962   On the source value of the text, see also Wijntjes, Visit, esp. 565–73; Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 6–7.

963   Fuess, de Varthema 405. See also Wolff, *Babylon* 238–9.

964   On de Varthema's efforts to learn Arabic, see de Varthema, *Travels* 9.

965   De Varthema, *Travels* 16–54.

966   De Varthema, *Travels* 9–11, 13–5.

967   The present study relies on the English translation by John Winter Jones, edited in 1853 by George Percy Badger.

garten saw military and administrative service in and around his home region of Tyrol, where he died in 941–2/1535.[968] Baumgarten's original German travelogue remains unpublished, but is available in Latin, English, and Russian translations, which include notes added by Baumgarten's servant Georg von Gaming (d. 948–9/1541).[969] As a keen observer and trained soldier, Baumgarten paid close attention to the architecture of Mamluk military structures, such as the Cairo Citadel, and to the local garrison forces.[970] He had the opportunity to attend at least one important Mamluk court event, the solemn reception of an Ottoman envoy in Jumādā I 913/October 1507.[971] Moreover, he left an account of his meeting with the ʿAbbasid caliph and a diligent enumeration of the sultan's official titles.[972]

In 918/1512, Jean Thenaud, who held a doctorate in theology and served the Order of Friars Minor Conventua as guardian in Angoulême, France, traveled to Egypt and Palestine as part of a royal French embassy seeking to establish friendly relations with the Mamluks and to win them as allies against the Ottomans.[973] His travelogue was published in 1513 under the title *Le voyage et l'itinéraire de Oultremer faict par père Jehan Thenaud, maistre ès ars, docteur en theologie et gardien des freres mineurs d'Angoulême* (The travel and itinerary to the Levant made by father Jehan Thenaud, master of arts, doctor of theology, and guardian of the Minorites of Angoulême).[974] Thanks to his official status, Thenaud was able to describe the diplomatic proceedings between the embassy and the Mamluk sultan, and to have a personal audience with the sultan, of which he wrote a detailed account in his travelogue.[975]

Thenaud was not the only European emissary to come to Cairo in 918/1512. In the same year, the experienced diplomat Domenico Trevisan (d. 942/1535) was in Egypt to conduct political and commerical negotiations with al-Ghawrī on behalf of the Venetian Senate.[976] The account of Trevisan's mission was written

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968   Paravicini, *Deutsche Reiseberichte* 298. Churchill and Churchill, Introduction, in Baumgarten, Travels 314–6.

969   The present study relies on the English translation published by Awnsham Churchill and John Churchill in 1752.

970   Baumgarten, Travels 329–30.

971   Baumgarten, Travels 330–2.

972   Baumgarten, Travels 328, 370.

973   Paravicini, *Französische Reiseberichte* 134–6. See also Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* lxviii–lxxiv, lxxxiv; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 117; Wiet, *L'Égypte* 625–6, 628.

974   The present study uses the new edition by Charles Schefer (1884).

975   Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 43–6.

976   Horii, Venetians 190–1. See also Wolff, *Babylon* 93–4, 153–162; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 12, 14–5, 84, 109–10; Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 373, 468–9, 479; Pedani, Venetians 104–5, 107–8; Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* lxv–lxviii, lxxvii–lxxxv; Goetz, Antagonist 171; Wiet,

by his secretary Zaccaria Pagani, who had accompanied him.[977] His work, originally in Italian, is presently only available in a French translation with the title *Le Relation de l'Ambassade de Domenico Trevisan auprès du Soudan d'Egypte* (The relation of the embassy of Domenico Trevisan to the sultan of Egypt).[978] It contains detailed accounts of the multiple meetings that Trevisan claimed to have had with al-Ghawrī.[979] Moreover, Pagani also describes other aspects of courtly life, such as the receptions of Safawid and Georgian envoys.[980]

Though not a traveler in the strict sense, the Franciscan monk Francesco Suriano was another Venetian who left a rather detailed account of selected aspects of late Mamluk history. Suriano was appointed guardian of Mont Simon in Jerusalem in 898–9/1493. In 915–6/1510, Mamluk authorities imprisoned Suriano, together with other monks, to use them as hostages with the Portuguese and other Europeans. The Venetian ambassador Trevisan mentioned above succeeded in freeing Suriano and his fellow captives in 918/1512. Thereafter, Suriano stayed in the Mamluk realm until 921/1515, when he returned to Italy where he died in or after 935–6/1529.[981] His *Trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente* (Treatise on the Holy Land and the Orient) was published in Venice in 930–1/1524.[982] It is based mainly on his own observations and deals largely with religious sites in Jerusalem and its surroundings, but also includes information on Mamluk Syria and Egypt more generally.[983] Suriano's description of the Cairo Citadel and his remarks about the Mamluk soldiers there, whom he must have met during one of his sojourns in Egypt, is particularly useful.[984]

Although also written by a traveler, the story behind the text commonly known as Leo Africanus' *La descrittione dell'Africa* (The description of Africa) is notably different from the other travelogues featured in this study. Its author

> *L'Égypte* 624, 626–8; Fuess, *Ufer* 264–5, 402; Moukarzel, Embassies 689–94. On a painting long thought to show Trevisan's reception by al-Ghawrī, see Ḥasan, Safīr; Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* lxxxv–lxxxvii; Goetz, Antagonist 171–4; de Vasselot, Portrait 100–1; Sauvaget, Représentation 5–12; Pedani, Venetians 107–8; Mayer, *Costume* 10, 81–2.

977 Wolff, *Babylon* 94. See also Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* lxxviii; Pedani, Venetians 108.

978 Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 147–226.

979 Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 182–92, 194–7, 203–6; Wolff, *Babylon* 155–6, 159–62.

980 Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 199–201; Wolff, *Babylon* 161. The diaries of the Venetian Marino Sanuto (d. 942/1536), published in 58 volumes, were not used in the present study for reasons of scope and language.

981 Bagatti, Preface, in Suriano, *Treatise* 1–11. See also Wolff, *Babylon* 104–5, 151–3.

982 The present study uses the English translation by Theophilus Bellorini and Eugene Hoade edited in 1949 by Bellarmino Bagatti.

983 Bagatti, Preface, in Suriano, *Treatise* 11–5.

984 Suriano, *Treatise* 190–1.

was born in the late 880s/1480s or early 890s/1490s in Granada as al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wazzān al-Fāsī. After the fall of Granada to Christian forces, al-Wazzān's family left the Iberian Peninsula for Fez, where he received a *madrasa* education. Participating in embassies on behalf of local rulers, al-Wazzān traveled widely and came to know much of the Islamicate world of his time. He visited Cairo several times, probably in 918–9/1513, 922–3/1517, and 923–4/1518. During his return voyage from his last trip to Cairo, al-Wazzān's vessel was captured by Iberian pirates and he was brought to the papal court. In early 926/1520, the Medici Pope Leo x (r. 918–27/1513–21) baptized al-Wazzān, who from that time on was called Johannes Leo de Medicis, better known as Leo Africanus. He remained in Rome, where he earned a living with his Arabic language skills and engaged in several literary projects, including his *La descrittione dell'Africa*. Probably around 933/1527, Leo Africanus left the Italian Peninsula for the Maghrib, where he is reported to have lived until at least 938–9/1532.[985]

The only surviving manuscript of Leo Africanus' *La descrittione dell'Africa* covers 900 pages; after its publication in 957/1550 it became the most widely read among the author's works, as indicated by its numerous editions and translations.[986] It begins with an introductory chapter on African geography and anthropology, followed by seven parts dealing with various countries and regions of Africa, with Egypt being the last country discussed. The last part of the work deals with the natural history of Africa.[987] In his description of Egypt, Leo Africanus relied largely on his own observations and included descriptions of physical structures and local customs, as was typical for travelogues in European languages of the time. Yet, in addition to this expected content, the author made use of his upbringing, language skills, and education to add insights that were unavailable to most foreign writers, but that locals might have considered too obvious to write about in their works. Thus, for example, coming from an almost exclusively Mālikī society, he commented on the various schools of law in Egypt, their differences, and their coexistence.[988] Moreover, as a visitor to Egypt, he had become acquainted with the Mamluk system of rule. Building on this knowledge, in his book he dedicated consid-

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985   Starczewska, Leo 439–40. On his life, see also Wolff, *Babylon* 87; Brown, Introduction, in Africanus, *History* i, i–li; Davis, *Trickster*.

986   The present study uses John Pory's English translation edited in 1896 by Robert Brown.

987   Starczewska, Leo 440, 442. On the work, see also Starczewska, Leo 443–4; Wolff, *Babylon* 87–8; Brown, Introduction, in Africanus, *History* i, xlv–xlvi, lii–lxxx; Davis, *Trickster*, *passim*.

988   Africanus, *History* iii, 884–6.

erable space to remarks on the members of the Mamluk military, its various units, and the offices associated with the Mamluk court.[989] Therefore, the value of Leo Africanus's work lies especially in its characteristics as an account of a society that, though foreign to its highly educated author, was nevertheless not so different from his own background and upbringing that he would have had to deal with the same cultural challenges faced by other authors writing in European languages.

3.5   Material and Epigraphic Sources

Material and epigraphic evidence such as manuscripts, coins, architectural structures, and inscriptions on buildings and objects provide additional information on al-Ghawrī's court.[990]

The numerous manuscripts from al-Ghawrī's time preserved in mostly Turkish libraries have received attention so far mainly for their role as carriers of texts. However, as Barbara Flemming and others showed, studies of their material characteristics can also generate valuable insights into late Mamluk court life. Through an analysis of the material features of numerous late Mamluk manuscripts, Flemming was able to identify a group of codices she characterized as follows:

> Among the manuscripts of Mamluk origin we find a number of outwardly very similar volumes with ex libirs in white ink on gold and blue and also with illuminated headpieces [...]. Some of them have the appearance of being copied by inexperienced hands, but others are in neat consistent Naskhī. They are all signed by Mamluks with their typical Turkish names.[991]

> With the exception of [two manuscripts], all volumes [...] have less than 100 folios; [...]. In this group the small number of lines per page (between

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989   Africanus, *History* iii, 888–96.

990   While we know of several paintings by European artists depicting al-Ghawrī, their source value is limited, as there is no conclusive evidence that their painters ever met the sultan, cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 179. On a European painting that is of some relevance for the present study, see section 6.2.1 below. For other images of the sultan, see, e.g., Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* lxxxv–lxxxix; de Vasselot, Portrait 98–100; Todt, [Einführung], in Martyr, *Legatio* 96.

991   Flemming, Activities 256.

seven and three) and the size of the script betray a tendency to fill up as much space as possible with the least quantity of writing.[992]

Of the more than twenty manuscripts listed by Flemming,[993] thus far, the present study has discussed three: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 138; MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 91; and MS, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 122. Moreover, the previously introduced manuscripts, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 94 (*Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān*); MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3144 (*Tadhkirat al-mulūk ilā aḥsan al-sulūk*); MS Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda Collection, Arab 294 (*Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt wa-nawādir*); and MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Quart. 1817 (*Kitab fī Tardīb mamlakat al-diyār al-Miṣriyya wa-umarāʾihā wa-arkānihā wa-arbāb al-waẓāʾif*) exhibit the same features described by Flemming, as do several others not analyzed in depth in the study at hand.[994]

How can we explain the existence of this group of several dozen physically very similar manuscripts that were copied by *mamlūk*s and date mostly to the reigns of sultans al-Ghawrī and Qāytbāy? Given the sometimes very modest writing skills of the copyists and the fact that no two manuscripts bear the name of the same scribe, there is a fair amount of support for Flemming's assumption that these texts are "school-exercises"[995] of *mamlūk*s, written as part of their training in non-military disciplines at the Cairo Citadel, possibly as the equivalent of what we would refer to today as final papers.[996] The contents of the works—mostly religious subjects and mirrors-for-princes mater-

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992   Flemming, Activities 258. On the bindings of these manuscripts, see Ohta, Bindings, esp. 217–9.

993   Flemming, Activities 256–8. See also Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 43–7; Haarmann, Arabic 87; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 51, 209.

994   The most detailed lists of manuscripts produced by *mamlūk*s presently available are Atanaisu, *Phénomène* 255–67; Flemming, Activities 256–9 (note also especially her footnote 65). To the MSS listed there, we may add the following from al-Ghawrī's reign: MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 94; MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 137; MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 178; MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 137; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi Ayasofya 1446 (fols. 50ʳ–60ʳ) [non vidi]; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3144; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Fatih 3465; MS Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda Collection, Arab 294; and the MS of *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī madḥ khayr al-bariyya* without shelf mark [non vidi] mentioned in Christie, *Art* 66; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 101.

995   Flemming, Activities 258.

996   Flemming, Activities 259. On this part of a *mamlūk*'s education, see Mauder, *Krieger* 80–92.

ial[997]—would be particularly fitting in such a context. Furthermore, Flemming assumed that this "practice [was] of two-fold purpose, to train Mamluks and to supplement the sultans' libraries."[998] The splendid decorations in many of these manuscripts and the significant amount of economic capital that must have been invested in their production supports this assumption and might also explain why so many of them survived. For the present study, considering these manuscripts as objects, we can identify their importance as at least two-fold: First, they tell us something about educational practices directly connected to al-Ghawrī's court and underline the sultan's interest in the non-military training of his *mamlūk*s. Second, these manuscripts constitute a significant body of evidence for the existence of book production at the late Mamluk court.

Copper coins (sg. *fals*) preserved from al-Ghawrī's reign likewise constitute relevant source material.[999] These coins are highly unusual for premodern Islamicate coinage in so far as they feature comparatively sophisticated pictorial designs showing mosque lamps, prayer niches, and water wheels.[1000] These designs have already received some attention from scholars interested in Mamluk numismatics.[1001] However, thus far, there has been no publication that offers a proper contextualization of these coins within the cultural and religious history of the late Mamluk period and examines the information they provide on al-Ghawrī's religious policy and his strategies of representation and legitimation.[1002] The present study addresses these desiderata by integrating a discussion of these coins into the analysis of political culture under al-Ghawrī.[1003]

Among the architectural structures dating to al-Ghawrī's reign, his *waqf*-supported funeral complex with its attached religious and educational structures is of particular importance for the study at hand. Erected and furnished

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997 Flemming, Activities 259.

998 Flemming, Activities 260.

999 Gold and silver coins from al-Ghawrī's days are extremely similar to those issued under the sultan's predecessors and do not lead to any conclusions on the cultural, political, and religious life under al-Ghawrī, apart from the fact that he exercised the right of coinage (*sikka*). On such coins, see Balog, *Coinage* 370–7; Heidemann, Kunstwerk 33.

1000 Cf. Bacharach and Anwar, Coinage 15–6, for the general absence of elaborate designs on Islamicate coins.

1001 See Balog, Hoard 257–9, 261–3; Balog, *Coinage* 380–1. The coins belong to Balog types 899, 901, and 903 and variants thereof.

1002 On Mamluk coins as sources about "claims of legitimation," see Schultz, History 183.

1003 My thanks go to Warren Schultz (Chicago) for making me aware of the relevant numismatic material and for providing me with the necessary know-how to integrate it into the present study.

mainly in the years 908–10/1503–4 and located mostly along both sides of the Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh Street in the Faḥḥamīn quarter of Cairo not far from the al-Azhar Mosque, the complex consists of the sultan's mausoleum (*qubba*),[1004] also known as a Sufi convent (*khānqāh*); a mosque, also referred to as a *madrasa*;[1005] a *wikāla* (inn);[1006] and several smaller attached buildings. Most of it exists up to the present day, largely in its original form. The majority of the façades of the complex are constructed from stones of two alternating colors, giving the entire ensemble a cohesive character. The original decoration with blue tiles on the dome of the mausoleum and the highly unusual fully rectangular minaret crowned by four bulbs likewise visually connects the different structures of the complex.[1007]

The Cairo Citadel is the second structure that deserves attention here.[1008] Originally constructed under the Ayyubid ruler Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 566–89/1171–93), the citadel underwent so many architectural changes and modifications over the course of its history that the present-day structure resembles that of the late Mamluk period only loosely. Therefore, modern scholarship must rely on both archeological excavations and narrative sources when reconstructing its architectural history. Often, the data from these two sources are difficult to reconcile.[1009] Hence, it is also difficult to draw a visual representation of what the Cairo Citadel looked like in al-Ghawrī's days. Thus, map 3.1 should be used

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1004   On *qubba* (lit., dome) meaning "mausoleum" see Rabbat, *Citadel* 127, 145–6.

1005   In the late Mamluk period, the term *madrasa* was used to denote a mosque built in a particular layout used earlier mainly for educational buildings, cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 76; Loiseau, City, esp. 191–2. On the educational and religious activities undertaken in al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, see section 5.2.2 below.

1006   On this term, see Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalaḥāt* 121. The present study understands al-Ghawrī's *wikāla* as part of his funeral complex because of its physical proximity to the core buildings of the complex, the common history of construction, and the shared architectural features.

1007   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 28, 55, 57–8; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 153–4; and my own observations. Cf. for the tiles, Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 81–3. On the complex, see also, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 73, 75–6, 80, 93–4, 99, 295–300, 311; ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Majmūʿat al-Sulṭān* 7–9, 15–9, 46–63, 74–81, 96–141; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 451–2, 455–6, 467–8; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 87–9; Warner, *Monuments* 100–1, 121.

1008   On the social and communicative role of the citadel in Mamluk court life, see esp. section 4.1.1 below. The following discussion of the citadel is mainly based on Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel; Rabbat, *Citadel*; Pradines, Fortifications 41–5, which rely heavily on al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, esp. iii.1, 638–98. Unfortunately, the topographical work *al-Tuḥfa al-fākhira fī dhikr rusūm khiṭaṭ al-Qāhira* that was written by a member of al-Ghawrī's court named Āqbughā al-Khāssakī does not provide any relevant information about the citadel.

1009   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 25–6. See also Rabbat, *Citadel* ix, 19–20.

with the knowledge that our understanding of the construction history of the citadel is far from complete.

As the map shows, the Cairo Citadel of the late Mamluk period consisted of two parts of roughly similar size: The first, northern enclosure centered around the structure identified on the map as "Burj al-Mansūri" mainly served military and administrative functions and housed the barracks of the sultan's *mamlūk*s. The second, southern enclosure was connected to the northern one via the Bāb al-Qulla and included the ruler's residential structures. It owed much of its late Mamluk shape to the construction activities of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 693–4/1293–4, 698–708/1298–1308, 709–41/1309–41) and was again subdivided into two parts: the northern section featured the main mosque of the citadel, several buildings used in al-Nāṣir's time mainly for ceremonial purposes, and the sultan's stables with their attached training facilities. The southern part encompassed, inter alia, buildings that were originally used as personal residential quarters and an open, park-like courtyard (*ḥawsh*) with a pool (*baḥra*).[1010]

The edifices most important for the present study are the main religious and ceremonial buildings of the northern part of the southern enclosure and several of the originally residential structures of its southern part. Among these, the green domed main mosque of the citadel first constructed under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 718/1318 with its two minarets and fortress-like façades is still preserved today, largely as it stood in the late Mamluk period.[1011] Nothing, however, remains of the main ceremonial building of the southern enclosure, the free standing Great Īwān[1012] erected by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and also known as the Dār al-ʿAdl (House of Justice). While this building had served earlier sultans as the terminal station of the *mawkib*, the main reception hall for ambassadors, and the main locus for *maẓālim* sessions, it lost most of these functions in the late Mamluk period, then fell into disuse and was replaced by Muḥammad ʿAlī's (r. 1220–64/1805–48) monumental mosque.[1013] In the late Mamluk period, a building called al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq (The Piebald[1014] Palace),

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1010   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 26. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 80–3; Rabbat, *Citadel* 110; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 66; Rabbat, *Citadel* 181–282.

1011   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 33, 74; Rabbat, *Citadel* 263–4 (for the rebuilding); and own observations. See also Rabbat, *Citadel* 225–6, 265–9; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 173–8.

1012   Here, *īwān* is used not to denote a specific architectural form, but rather a palace-like structure more generally, cf. Grabar, Īwān 287.

1013   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 36, 38–41, 75–6; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 81–2. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 42–5, 77–8; Rabbat, *Citadel* 244–63.

1014   *Ablaq* (bicolored, lit., piebald) denotes a building style characterized by the alternating use of light and dark stones, cf. Rabbat, *Citadel* 199.

Legend:
- Salah al-dīn (1173/74-1183)
- Al-'Ādil (1183-1250)
- Mamluks (1250-1517)

0   50   100m

Burj al-Haddad
Burj al-Ramla
Burj al-Sahra
Bâb al-Jabal
Walls of Ganbalat
Burj al-Muballat
Bâb al-Qarafa
Burj al-Ahmar
Burj al-Turfa
Bāb al-Mudarraj
Burj al-Mansūri
Burj Kerkilyan
Bāb al-Qulla
Burj al Suffa
Granaries
Burj al-Siba   Burj al-Qulla
Mosque al-Nasir
Qasr al-Ablaq   Dar al-'Adl   Bîr Yûsuf
Bāb al-Silsila
Southern enclosure And palatial complex
Burj al-Rafraf
Diwan and library
Hauwsh, residences and harems
Royal stables
Rumayla square

MAP 3.1   Map of the Citadel of Cairo, taken from Pradines, Fortifications 65, labeled there figure 10. Courtesy of Stéphane Pradines

named because of its construction out of black and yellow stones, took over some of the official functions of the Great Īwān. Like most other buildings in the northern part of the southern enclosure, it dated to the period of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Al-Ghawrī used this building for his *mawkib*.[1015]

Even more important in the present context are the originally residential complexes of the southern part of the southern enclosure. Here, in the vicinity of the *ḥawsh*, late Mamluk rulers constructed and renovated buildings which over the years became the main sites of Mamluk court life and served as venues for receptions, audiences, and other courtly occasions.[1016] The structures in this area, none of which still stand in their original form, included the late Ayyubid or early Mamluk hall known as Qāʿat al-ʿAwāmīd (The Hall of Columns), which became the main residence of the sultan's principal wives,[1017] and two loggias (sg. *maqʿad*)[1018] erected by sultans Qāytbāy and al-Ghawrī overlooking the *ḥawsh*.[1019] Moreover, the architectural arrangement of this part of the citadel included several halls (sg. *qāʿa*) which figured prominently in late Mamluk court life. The Duhaysha Hall stood on the opposite side of the *ḥawsh* from Qāytbāy's *maqʿad*. The construction of this building, which was originally intended as a personal space for the Mamluk ruler and later served as the "living room"[1020] of late Mamluk sultans, began in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's time and was finished in 744/1344.[1021] In its neighborhood stood two additional halls constructed by sultans al-Ashraf Janbalāṭ (r. 905–6/1500–1) and al-Ashraf Shaʿbān (r. 764–78/1363–77); both halls were known by the name al-Ashrafiyya, after their builders.[1022] Finally, the domed Bayṣariyya Hall erected under Ḥasan b. al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 748–52/1347–51, 755–62/1354–61) offered—together with its neighboring garden—additional venues for courtly events in the southern part of the southern enclosure.[1023]

1015   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 45–6, 75. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 46–51; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 82–3; Rabbat, *Citadel* 199–213, 220–1; Popper, *Notes* i, 20–1. A structure believed to be part of this building has been partially excavated, see Abdulfattah and Sakr, Mosaics.

1016   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 51–2. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 56–9, 66–7, 69–70; Rabbat, *Citadel* 294.

1017   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 52–3. On this building, see also Rabbat, *Citadel* 93–5, 221.

1018   Cf. for term, Rabbat, *Citadel* 212. See also Amīn and Ibrāhīm, *al-Muṣṭalaḥāt* 113–4.

1019   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54, 58. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 27; Rabbat, *Citadel* 223–4.

1020   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 55.

1021   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54–5. On this building, see also Rabbat, *Citadel* 48, 221, 275; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 83; Popper, *Notes* i, 22.

1022   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54–5.

1023   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 55; Rabbat, *Citadel* 221. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture* 83.

For the present study, the importance of the physical features of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex and the Cairo Citadel is twofold. First, we must understand the physical makeup of these spaces in order to grasp the spatial context of courtly events held there and the effects these contexts had on the communicative significance of the events. Second, as ensembles of physical objects, both the citadel and the funeral complex bear direct witness to the sultan's activities as a sponsor of architectural projects.

Thanks to al-Ghawrī's multiple building projects and the continued production of luxury items, we know of numerous inscriptions that offer further relevant information on his reign.[1024] Today, a large corpus of this and other Mamluk epigraphic material is easily available on the steadily growing online database Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique.[1025] This database includes data and often images of more than 40,000 inscriptions from all areas of the Islamicate world up to the year 1000/1591–2, with a significant share of material from the Mamluk Sultanate.[1026] When the contents of the Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique are combined with published Mamluk epigraphic material that has not been included, thus far, in this database, we have at our disposal several dozen inscriptions dating to al-Ghawrī's reign.

For the present study, the significance of inscriptions from al-Ghawrī's reign lies in the fact that they were intended to reflect and communicate the sultan's image to large audiences, that is, to all literate people who beheld the pertinent structures and objects and read their inscriptions.[1027] Thus, they offer an opportunity to study how the sultan and those implementing his architectural and artistic projects wanted the ruler to be seen by his contemporaries and for posterity. In this context the at times highly innovative titles and honorifics applied to al-Ghawrī deserve special attention, as Blain H. Auer argued regarding the comparable case of the Delhi Sultanate:

> Titles were more than a prefix or suffix indicating status and rank, but
> were concepts of rule [...]. They were used to signify association to a

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1024   See Juvin, Inscriptions 211, on the large amount of available Mamluk epigraphic material.

1025   Available under the URL http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org (last accessed 18 February 2020). All references to this website use the database index numbers provided there, taking into account the material of the first 14 issues.

1026   On this corpus, see Juvin, Inscriptions 212.

1027   On the questions of the visibility and readability of building inscriptions, see O'Kane, Medium, esp. 416–7, 427; Juvin, Inscriptions 220–1; Amitai, Remarks 51; Ettinghausen, Epigraphy, esp. 299–306, 311–7; and on the question of their intended audiences, see Juvin, Inscriptions 214–5, 220.

group, emphasize a political philosophy of rule, establish a connection with the past, produce an aura of power, or mark a change in authority.[1028]

Given that inscriptions from al-Ghawrī's reign often consist largely of titles,[1029] they offer a particularly good opportunity to study this aspect of political communication in the late Mamluk period, especially when brought into dialogue with other sources that help us to understand the background of Mamluk titulature.

3.6   Synopsis of Sources Utilized

Unlike earlier publications on the history of the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate, the present study seeks to utilize a broad basis of sources that goes significantly beyond the traditional historiographical genres of the chronicle and the biographical dictionary in order to draw a holistic picture of the intellectual, religious, and political court life under Sultan al-Ghawrī and concomitantly elucidate aspects of its literary culture. The main sources for this work are three eyewitness accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, accounts that allow for particularly deep insights into these events that were of pivotal importance for the scholarly, religious, and political communication of the sultan's court. These three texts, all of which belong to the genre of courtly *majālis* works, represent two independent traditions of writing about the sultan's salons, a fact that greatly enhances their value as historical sources.

These main sources are complemented by a selection of other sources, among which chronicles and biographical dictionaries deserve special attention, as they provide information on the historical context of the *majālis* accounts and on aspects of courtly and non-courtly life that the *majālis* accounts do not cover. Moreover, with their diverse geographical and chronological background, chronicles and biographical dictionaries add perspectives on al-Ghawrī's reign that help to balance the focus on Cairo that is typical for our three main sources.

Selected Arabic literary offerings and related works not only provide supplementary historical information, but also shed light on multiple discourses on rulership in the Islamicate world of the early tenth/sixteenth century. Similarly, typical examples of mirrors-for-princes that were produced for al-Ghawrī

1028   Auer, *Symbols* 116–7. See also Aigle, Les inscriptions, esp. 58–9; Juvin, Inscriptions 214–20; Rabbat, Militarization 5; Marsham, Caliph 8–9; Trausch, Aibak 194–5, 214.

1029   See Juvin, Inscriptions 211, on typical elements of Mamluk inscriptions.

or under his patronage elucidate the traditions of political thought current at the sultan's court. Furthermore, late Mamluk chancery manuals contain helpful information on various aspects of Mamluk courtly and political culture.

Beyond these genres of narrative sources, the present study also relies on the main endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex as a documentary source that provides data on the representative and legitimizing activities of this ruler. Furthermore, Arabic poems (primarily religious in nature) that can be attributed to al-Ghawrī serve as another, so far almost completely overlooked, type of source that adds valuable information on the Mamluk sultan's religious and intellectual horizon.

In addition to these Arabic sources, the present study also builds on selected Turkic language material, including a collection of poems attributed to al-Ghawrī that are very similar to those in Arabic; these show that al-Ghawrī was also familiar with Ottoman Turkish literature of his time. Moreover, translations undertaken for al-Ghawrī provide us with information on intellectual and artistic activities at the Mamluk court in a transregional context, while chronicles and chancery works written by Ottoman authors are noteworthy for their view on Mamluk-Ottoman relations.

Travelogues and related texts in European languages constitute valuable supplementary sources, as they include observations on various aspects of daily life that do not appear in works by local authors. Finally, select material and epigraphic sources contribute to our knowledge about educational practices at the late Mamluk court, the political and religious culture of the time, the spatial context of courtly events, and al-Ghawrī's support for architecture and the arts.

As the following chapters demonstrate, an approach that seeks to integrate the information included in these highly diverse sources is a particularly promising way of overcoming the reliance on a very limited number of narrative works that, until now, has characterized much of the work on the late Mamluk period.[1030] Against this background, the present study seeks to show that incorporating evidence from multiple distinct types of sources is not only desirable from a methodological point of view, but indeed helps to create a holistic picture of late Mamluk court culture, a picture that is much more than the sum of its parts.

1030   Cf. section 2.2.2 above.

Learning and the Transmission of Knowledge at al-Ghawrī's Court

"Understanding is a gift, but knowledge must be acquired"[1]—this statement, which *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* attributes to Ptolemy I (r. 323–283 or 282 BCE) points to the importance members of al-Ghawrī's court accorded to learning and the transmission of knowledge. The present chapter explores the ways in which members of the sultan's court participated in these activities and elucidates the role of courtly events in this communicative context. It thus seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of late Mamluk intellectual culture. Moreover, by focusing on al-Ghawrī's court as a particularly well-documented example, it expands our knowledge about the role of premodern courts in learned activities more generally.[2]

Grebner sums up what is known about learned activities at premodern European courts:

> Dealing with knowledge at court is governed by different rules and offers different chances than academic, urban, or monastic cultures of knowledge […]. The court is […] in need of particular contents of knowledge; […] it is a social formation with specific counter-values for knowledge, with attraction for a specific pool of carriers of knowledge, [and] with a particular structure of relationships into which carriers of knowledge are integrated.[3]

Against this background, the present chapter asks whether learning and the transmission of knowledge at al-Ghawrī's court likewise exhibited specific "courtly" features or was, rather, shaped by broader late Mamluk intellectual culture.

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1 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.

2 Cf. Bihrer, Curia 263, on the limitations of our knowledge about the role of courts in this context.

3 Grebner, Einleitung 7. On the intellectual culture of European courts, see also, e.g., Fried, Netzen; Bumke, *Kultur* ii, 595–783. On courts as centers of knowledge, see Schlieben, *Macht*, esp. 13, 28, 163; Duindam, Royal Courts 21.

Both "learning" and the "transmission of knowledge" are understood in a rather general sense. Following Bourdieu, "learning" denotes all activities that lead to the incorporation of cultural capital, regardless of whether or not they take place in a specialized institution, such as a school or *madrasa*. Moreover, it is irrelevant whether the incorporation of cultural capital is the sole or primary motivation for a given activity or whether it takes place consciously or unconsciously.[4]

The term "transmission of knowledge" denotes communicative processes in which cultural capital is transferred from person A to person B in such a way that person B is able to incorporate it. Such processes can have different forms, including spoken, textual, and non-verbal communication, and can be unidirectional or reciprocal. They may take place in a variety of social settings, including families, elementary schools, or institutions of higher learning.[5]

This broad understanding of processes of "learning" and "transmission of knowledge" comprises, but is not limited to more institutionalized intellectual activities of acquiring and transferring knowledge in the premodern Islamicate world such as, for example, the transmission of *ḥadīth*s according to scholarly standards. Not limiting ourselves to such formalized intellectual activities allows us to grasp the intellectual role of al-Ghawrī's court more fully, especially since formalized processes made up only a rather limited portion of the intellectual life around the sultan, as is shown below. Moreover, this broader understanding of processes of "learning" and "transmission of knowledge" ensures that our trajectories of inquiry are in line with earlier scholarship on intellectual activities in Mamluk contexts.

The first part of the present chapter focuses on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as historical events important to courtly processes of learning and the transmission of knowledge. Understanding these events as a series of occasions with a communicative character, the chapter first studies the spatial, chronological, and behavioral parameters of the relevant communicative acts, thereby paying special attention to the symbolic meanings involved and the etiquette adhered to. Thereafter, the chapter deals with the various groups of participants and discusses typical or particularly important representatives of each group. It asks not only who communicated during the *majālis*, in what form, and with what purpose, but it also pays attention to the intended and unintended audiences of the respective communicative acts. Using the analytical concepts of "court

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4   Building on Bourdieu, Kapital 185–7.
5   Building on Bourdieu, Kapital 186, 188.

society," "protective patronage," and "benefit patronage" delineated above, the first part of the present chapter elucidates the social relations between *majālis* participants.

The second part of the chapter stands at the core of the analysis of the intellectual life of al-Ghawrī's court. Focusing on primarily discursive acts of communication in the sultan's *majālis*, it provides an overview of the fields of knowledge that the sultan and the members of his court society dealt with during their meetings. In addition to this overview, for each identified scholarly discipline it studies one or several *majālis* discussions in detail. These case studies not only show what the *majālis* participants discussed, but also elucidate the form of and background against which these acts of scholarly communication took place.

Building on the results of the first two sections of the present chapter and on the reflections in the first chapter, the third section discusses whether we are justified in referring to the courtly events of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as "salons." The fourth section widens the scope of the discussion and addresses other educational and scholarly activities of al-Ghawrī's courts beyond his *majālis*. The final section of the chapter summarizes and discusses our findings on education and scholarship at al-Ghawrī's court against the background of the broader communicative context of knowledge production and transmission in the late Mamluk period. It asks why scholarly communication took place among the members of al-Ghawrī's court in the form it did and elucidates the symbolic meanings conveyed. Moreover, it compares our findings on the intellectual life at the sultan's court to what we know about the scholarly culture of the late Mamluk period more generally. It thereby points to specific "courtly" features of scholarly communication among the sultan's court society, but also shows to what degree this reflected general trends in late Mamluk intellectual life.

Taken together, the chapter argues that court life under al-Ghawrī did not exhibit signs of a "diminishment in [...] erudition"[6] as claimed in earlier studies, nor was it intellectually irrelevant. Rather, the sultan's court constituted a center of scholarly life and patronage, and its regular events, such as the *majālis*, brought together learned people of various social, cultural, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds. Together with the sultan, they discussed contested topics that marked the state of the art in key disciplines of Islamicate learning and at times produced innovative solutions to problems Muslim scholars had discussed for centuries. While many of the questions they debated were

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6 Irwin, *Night* 443. See also Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 102.

closely linked to the Islamic religious heritage, others came from fields, such as philosophy, history, or poetry, that were less shaped by religious notions.

Marked by symbiotic relations between their participants, these learned courtly events offered al-Ghawrī opportunities to acquire knowledge, but also to present himself as a well-versed, wise, virtuous, and pious ruler whose name was immortalized through his literary and scholarly patronage. To other participants, the learned activities of the court offered chances to showcase their intellectual skills and establish or reaffirm their position in networks of patronage. Moreover, participants could experience aesthetic pleasure from the court society's often both entertaining and edifying scholarly meetings, which demonstrated that the Mamluk court was, at least culturally, on a par with others in the Islamicate ecumene. At times, the learned, entertaining, and legitimating communication that defined these events reflects specifically courtly interests, but also demonstrates that al-Ghawrī's court was thoroughly embedded in the broader learned culture of the Mamluk Sultanate with its defining features of professionalization and cosmopolitanism, its blurred borders between religious scholarship and literary activities, and its overabundance of information that necessitated new forms of knowledge organization and review.

4.1   Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as Historical Events

In studying al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as historical events, we have to rely on an almost entirely different set of sources than those used above in the account of the political history of al-Ghawrī's reign, since Ibn Iyās, the most important historian of the last years of Mamluk history, is largely silent on what took place in the inner circles of the sultan's court society. Therefore, a historical analysis of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* must be based on other sources, among which the Arabic literary accounts of these events are by far the most important.

We already discussed above whether and how these texts can be used as historical sources.[7] It is, however, important to point out that al-Sharīf's *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is by far the most detailed source regarding the spatial and chronological details of the *majālis* and the identity of their attendees.[8] Evidence from other sources, while not comparable in terms of the level of specificity, largely corroborates the data included in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and is adduced wherever possible. Nevertheless, given the heavy reliance on

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7   See esp. section 3.1.5 above.
8   See sections 3.1.1.2 and 3.1.1.3 above on why al-Sharīf was particularly interested in these data.

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya, our presentation of the *majālis* as historical events must focus on the ten months in 910 and 911 (1505) covered by *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. The following sections show that according to this text and other sources, the *majālis* took place in conformity with a rather regular schedule in a limited number of carefully chosen locations in which al-Ghawrī hosted local dignitaries and high-profile foreign guests, but also marginal figures, to discuss a broad array of topics, following a shared etiquette of debate. For the sultan and the other participants, these events offered valuable opportunities for self-presentation, but were also characterized, at times, by fierce competition for social, cultural, and economic capital.

4.1.1   *The Time, Place, and Etiquette of al-Ghawrī's* majālis

We do not know exactly when al-Ghawrī began to convene *majālis*. The fact that the first *majlis* we have evidence for took place in Ramaḍān 910/March 1505 suggests that the sultan was holding these events even during the early, troubled years of his reign. Moreover, while is not clear whether the ruler continued to organize *majālis* up to the end of his life, the fact that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* refers to the hosting of *majālis* as an ongoing activity indicates that *majālis* were held at least until Rabīʿ II 919/ June 1513.

Apparently, the *majālis* followed quite a regular schedule, with meetings habitually taking place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.[9] The vast majority of *majālis* for which we have exact dates were convened on these days, with 28 of 96 *majālis* held on Tuesdays, 28 on Thursdays, and 30 on Saturdays. This schedule was altered only for specific reasons, such as religious holidays. If a *majlis* could not take place on a Tuesday or Thursday, it was usually moved to a Wednesday, with 7 of 96 sessions taking place on this day. One *majlis* was convened on a Friday and two on a Sunday. No *majālis* are reported as being held on Mondays.[10]

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9   It is unclear why Irwin, *Night* 441, speaks of "twice-weekly *majalis*."

10   The reasons for this schedule are difficult to discern. We know from Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 88, that al-Ghawrī held regular courtly events referred to as *mawākib* on Mondays and Thursdays at the citadel and on Tuesdays and Saturdays at the *maydān* beneath it. This might suggest that *majālis* were habitually convened on largely the same days as the sultan's *mawākib*. This might have had the advantage that at least those *majālis* attendees who occupied administrative offices or were otherwise personally responsible to the sultan most likely also participated in the *mawākib* and were thus already present in or close to the citadel. While there is no apparent reason not to hold the *majālis* after the Monday *mawākib*, we may speculate that perhaps, given his age, the sultan did not want to host two *majālis* on two evenings consecutively.

At times, the regular meetings were suspended for longer periods. For example, the conflict discussed above about an issue of Quranic exegesis which prompted al-Ghawrī to banish al-Sharīf from his presence also seems to have resulted in a temporary cancellation of the regular *majālis* sessions in Shaʿbān 911/December 1505. Moreover, salons did not take place for several weeks between the end of Shawwāl 910/early April 1505 and late Dhū l-Ḥijja 910/late May 1505 because of the death of one of the sultan's sons.[11]

While none of our sources includes systematic information on the time of the day the *majālis* took place, there is evidence that many, if not all of them were held in the evening or at night, as already assumed by Flemming and Irwin.[12] In twenty cases, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* states explicitly that a given *majlis* took place at night (*layla*), while there is not a single reference to a session held during the daytime. Moreover, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī refers to the sultan's salons as "nightly conversation[s]" (*musāmara*)[13] and *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* states that the sultan spent the night hours in his learned *majlis*.[14]

We have quite detailed information on the duration of the *majālis*, as, in 91 instances, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* states the length of a given session in units of time known as *daraja*. Since we know that one *daraja* equals one degree on a sundial or 4 minutes,[15] we can compute that the *majālis* lasted between 16 *darajas* (1 hour and 4 minutes) and 64 *darajas* (4 hours and 16 minutes), with an average duration of about 33 *darajas* (2 hours and 12 minutes). The clear majority, namely 79 sessions, took between 20 and 40 *darajas* (that is, 1 hour and 20 minutes to 2 hours and 40 minutes). Apparently, the participants invested significant amounts of time in these meetings.

As for the places in which the *majālis* were held, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions the respective venues for 92 of 96 *majālis*. The building known as "al-Ashrafiyya" housed the majority of the salons with 49 sessions, followed by "al-Maqʿad" and "al-Duhaysha" with 19 sessions each, "al-Baysariyya" with 3 sessions, and the *ḥawsh* and the *dīwān* with 1 *majlis* each.

It is not always clear which architectural structures these designations refer to. We know of two buildings located within the Cairo Citadel called al-Ashrafiyya, both of which were located in the southern part of the southern enclos-

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11   Cf. al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 47–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 20–2.
12   Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24; Irwin, Thinking 38.
13   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 48.
14   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 243ᵛ–244ʳ.
15   Lane, *Lexicon* iii, 869. See also Schimmel, Glimpses 363; Meyerhof, Augenkrankheit 288; Stowasser, *Day* 157.

ure. It seems more probable that al-Ghawrī would hold his salons in the newer of the two structures erected by Sultan al-Ashraf Janbalāṭ (r. 905–6/1500–1) rather than the somewhat ancient hall bearing the name of its builder al-Ashraf Shaʿbān (r. 764–78/1363–77), as this hall had fallen into disuse over the years.[16]

As for the building called al-Maqʿad, or Loggia,[17] again, there were two structures located in the southern part of the citadel's southern enclosure known by this name. The first was built by Qāytbāy and the second by al-Ghawrī. Our text apparently refers to the older building, as the newer one was only officially put into use long after the *majālis* recounted in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* took place.[18]

The buildings called "al-Duhaysha" and "al-Baysariyya" (*sic*) in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are the easiest to identify. The former stood near Janbalāṭ's Ashrafiyya Hall on the northern side of the southern part of the southern enclosure of the citadel,[19] while the latter was located next to the harem structure of the southern part of the southern enclosure.[20]

The two other *majālis* venues mentioned in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* do not constitute specific buildings. As mentioned above, the *ḥawsh* was a park-like courtyard with a pool around which most of the buildings of the southern section of the southern enclosure were arranged.[21] As for the term *dīwān*, it is not possible to identify it with a specific structure. While we know of at least two buildings within the Cairo Citadel that were referred to as *dīwān*s in the Ottoman period, there is considerable disagreement among specialists on the question as to which Mamluk buildings these designations applied.[22]

We may ask why the attendees of the *majālis* chose precisely these locations within the Cairo Citadel for their meetings. To a certain extent, their choices seem to reflect practical considerations, given that there is a clear chronological pattern in the use of the different localities. For the months Ramaḍān 910 to early Muḥarram 911 and again from Rabīʿ I 911 to Jumādā II 911 (February to

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16   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54–5.

17   On this term, see section 3.5 above.

18   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54, 58; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 165 (for the completion of al-Ghawrī's Maqʿad). See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 49.

19   See also, e.g., Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 680. It is not clear why Meyerhof, Augenkrankheit 287, identifies this building with the *madrasa* of Sultan Faraj (r. 801–8/1399–1405 and 808–15/1405–12).

20   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54–5; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 679. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 48.

21   Cf. section 3.5 above. For details, see also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1 741–2.

22   Cf. Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 59–60; Rabbat, *Citadel* 245.

June and August to November 1505), the Ashrafiyya was the main *majālis* venue. From mid-Muḥarram 911 till the beginning of Rabīʿ I 911 (June to August 1505), that is, during the hottest summer months in Egypt, the salons took place in the Maqʿad. This makes sense, given that the latter was a loggia with an open arcaded front[23] that would allow for a cooling draft, especially since it overlooked the pool of the citadel in the *ḥawsh* area.[24] The Ashrafiyya, in turn, was a more massive structure that constituted a better choice for the cooler months of the year.

Similar practical reasons apparently stood behind the decision to meet in the *ḥawsh* and the *dīwān*. The *majlis* that took place in the *ḥawsh* was not a regular meeting, but held on the religious holiday of ʿĀshūrāʾ, which might have called for a special venue.[25] Moreover, the fact that this session took place in mid-June 1505 CE and thus during the hottest part of the year probably informed the decision to hold it in the open courtyard next to the pool. As for the *dīwān*, the only session which took place there was highly unusual, in so far as it dealt not with scholarly matters, but with the administrative question of al-Sharīf's stipend as a Sufi in the sultan's funeral complex.[26] If we understand the term *dīwān* as denoting a governmental office more generally,[27] rather than a building, the choice of the venue becomes easily understandable.

The question remains why al-Ghawrī used the two additional structures of the Duhaysha Hall and Baysariyya Hall for his *majālis*. Both buildings, which were already more than 150 years old when al-Ghawrī began his tenure,[28] were renovated on his behalf early during his reign. In the case of the Baysariyya Hall, the sultan had his craftsmen begin their work in Rabīʿ II 910/September–October 1504. They renewed the structure of the hall as well as its decorations.[29] We do not know how long these renovations took, but they were so substantial that a minimum duration of several months appears plausible. Thus, the work might just have been finished in late Ramaḍān and early Shawwāl 910/mid-March 1505, when the sultan used the Baysariyya Hall for three of his meetings, including the *majlis* which took place on the particularly prominent date of the last day of Ramaḍān. The fact that the Baysariyya Hall figures as a *majālis* venue

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23   Rabbat, *Citadel* 212.
24   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 54.
25   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 63.
26   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 205–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 90–1.
27   Cf., e.g., de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire* i, 755.
28   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 55.
29   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 67–8. See also Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1999–2000; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 293ʳ, 295ᵛ–298ʳ.

only during this particular time span suggests that the sessions held there were to re-inaugurate the freshly renovated building, especially since the sultan celebrated the re-inauguration of another renovated architectural complex in a similar manner.[30]

The choice of the Duhaysha Hall as a place for the salons might have followed a similar logic. Ibn Iyās notes that in Muḥarram 911/June–July 1505 the sultan had this building, "including its ceilings, doors, and all its features" renovated.[31] It appears plausible that these construction works likewise took several months.[32] In mid-Jumādā II 911/mid-November 1505, the work was obviously finished, as from this time on, the hall served as the venue for all subsequent *majālis* al-Sharīf recounted. As in the case of the Baysariyya Hall, the sultan was obviously eager to put this newly beautified hall into use, thus demonstrating to his court society that his craftsmen had finished the substantive renovations. Unlike the move to the Baysariyya Hall, however, the relocation to the Duhaysha Hall was permanent, according to the data al-Sharīf provides.

We should not assume that practical considerations alone determined where to hold the *majālis*, given that the location of courtly events was of great symbolic significance. Therefore, we must ask what meanings were attached to the *majālis* venues.

It is helpful to begin with an obvious observation: All *majālis* we know of took place within the Cairo Citadel. This should not be taken for granted, as several other locations could have provided space for these events, such as the sultan's funeral complex with its *madrasa* or the park-*cum*-hippodrome (*maydān*) beneath the citadel that al-Ghawrī regularly used for other courtly events.[33] What made the citadel such a special space that the *majālis* took place there and nowhere else? While this location was clearly the best choice in terms of the ruler's personal security and convenience, its status in the political culture of the Mamluk Sultanate appears to be of at least equal importance. The citadel was not only the administrative and military center of the sultanate,[34] but, as Doris Behrens-Abouseif pointed out, it also constituted one of the most important "symbol[s] of sovereignty" and "manifestation[s] of glory and

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30   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 123.

31   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 80. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94; Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1998–9; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 93.

32   The statement in Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 297ᵛ, that the work took less than a month does not match what we know about the extent of the renovations and seems to be flattery.

33   On these localities, see sections 5.2.2 and 6.3.2 below.

34   Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 235.

power"[35] in Mamluk culture.[36] As the locus of most Mamluk court rituals,[37] it was an architectural symbol of Mamluk rule, wealth, and military power.

This quality of the citadel was not lost even on foreigners, as the accounts of travelers who visited Cairo during the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate confirm. In John Pory's classical English translation of Leo Africanus' account, we read:

> Without the citie of Cairo […] standeth the castle of the Soldan […]. This castle is enuironed with high and impregnable walles, and containeth such stately and beautifull palaces, that they can hardly be described. Paued they are with excellent marble, and on the roofes they are gilt and curiously painted, their windows are adorned with diuers colours, like to the windows of some palaces of Europe; and their gates be artificially carued and beautified with gold and azure.[38]

Similarly, the French ambassador Jean Thenaud states: "Le palais du Souldan et ses jardins est chose en beaulté, richesse et magnificence digne d'admiration. En icelluy sont ordinairement et pour sa garde, levans, boyvans, mengeans, dix mille mammeluz et autant de chevaulx."[39] When describing the entry of Domenico Trevisan's Venetian delegation into the sultan's audience hall, the ambassador's secretary Zaccaria Pagani writes, according to Schefer's French translation:

> Nous gravîmes un escalier et pénétrâmes dans une salle de la plus grande magnificence: elle est infiniment plus belle que la salle d'audience de notre Illustrissime Seigneurie de Venise. Le sol était couvert d'une mosaïque de porphyre, de serpentine, de marbre et d'autres pierres de prix. Cette mosaïque était presqu'entièrement recouverte par un tapis. Le plafond et les lambris étaient sculptés et dorés: les grilles de fenêtres étaient en bronze au lieu d'être en fer.[40]

Later, he gives a more general description of the citadel:

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35   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 26 (both quotations).
36   On Islamicate citadels in general, see also Grabar, Palaces 68–9; Bacharach, Complexes 124; Bacharach, Court-Citadel 223–6; and on the Cairo Citadel, see Franz, Castle 356–60, 376; Rabbat, *Citadel* 17, 83; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 23–4.
37   Van Steenbergen, Ritual 229. See also Rabbat, *Staging* 8.
38   Africanus, *History* iii, 881–2.
39   Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 49.
40   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 188.

> Le Caire a une citadelle […] dont l'enceinte a une étendue de trois milles: elle est bâtie sur une éminence formée de roches et elle domine toute la ville. A l'intérieur se trouve la très belle et très agréable résidence du Soudan. […] Cette citadelle ne porterait pas, chez nous, le nom de forteresse; on l'appellerait un magnifique palais.[41]

The monk Francesco Suriano writes about the "big and very strong castle in which the Sultan dwells with all his court and guards which number 12,000 Mamluks."[42] Similarly, Martin Baumgarten, with the experienced eye of a military specialist, speaks of "the Sultan's castle, both large and strong; to which you enter by twelve iron gates, all well secur'd with guns and guards."[43]

These descriptions of the Cairo Citadel are particularly valuable, as they come from people who were not used to seeing this architectural complex and thus described it with a level of detail that local sources, such as, for example, Ibn Iyās, considered unnecessary. Evidently, the complex evoked in them associations of beauty, wealth, and military strength. Pagani's statements that the sultan's audience hall was "infiniment plus belle que la salle d'audience de notre Illustrissime Seigneurie de Venise" is surprising in its candor, given that the author wrote for a Venetian readership that might not have appreciated the implied negative evaluation of an architectural piece of pride in their home city. Similarly, the numerous references to valuable materials like gold, marble, and precious stones convey a clear image of richness and splendor. Furthermore, the high numbers given for the local garrison forces underline the military strength associated with the structure, as do the remarks about its walls, gates, and guns.

Moreover, all authors linked the citadel explicitly to the sultan as the ruler of the land. Indeed, every single source cited made it clear that the citadel was not just an impressive building, but the spatial and symbolic center of rule of the Mamluk Sultanate. Its other qualities—its beauty, richness, and strength—reflected upon this political formation in general and its head, Sultan al-Ghawrī, in particular. To the foreign travelers, the citadel was thus the symbol of Mamluk rule par excellence.

We have reason to assume that the local population was at least as impressed with the fortified complex as were the foreign travelers who had seen numerous other castles, palaces, and citadels during their professional careers. Al-Ẓāhirī, one of the few late Mamluk authors who describe the citadel at greater length,

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41   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 208.
42   Suriano, *Treatise* 190.
43   Baumgarten, Travels 329.

largely agrees with the European authors in his characterization of the complex, as he also mentions its beauty, strength, and magnificence:

> As for the residence (*dār*) of the noble ruler, in which the throne (*takht*) of the kingdom is located, it is known today as the citadel of the mountain. It is unequaled in its dimensions, its embellishment, its splendor, and its loftiness. It consists of walls, trenches, towers, and numerous very strong iron gates. In it, palaces (*quṣūr*), *īwān*s, audience halls (*majālis*), rooms (*ghuraf*), barracks, courtyards, hippodromes, stables, mosques, schools (*madāris*), markets, and baths are located which [would] take long to describe.[44]

Thus, the answer to the question of why the sultan held his *majālis* within the citadel lies, to a considerable degree, in the meanings associated with this fortified complex: Its walls and palaces symbolized not only the wealth, the riches, and the military resources the sultanate commanded, but indeed it was a symbol of Mamluk rule itself. By holding his *majālis* in this space, al-Ghawrī could be sure that these events were closely connected to the most important architectural manifestation of his rule. Moreover, by convening his learned sessions in this complex, the sultan could also hope to add a new element to the set of symbolic meanings associated with it, as the citadel could thereby become a courtly space of learning and the transmission of knowledge. Thus, there was the potential that the communicative meanings of the *majālis* would not only be underlined by the space in which they took place, but would also influence and modify the connotations attached to their venues.[45]

Yet, within the confines of the citadel walls, there were plenty of other places to meet, including numerous locations in the mainly military northern enclosure. Nevertheless, all *majālis* for which we can determine exact venues took place in a rather small section of the complex: The southern part of the southern enclosure. As noted, this area had originally been designed as the personal living quarters of the ruler and his closest dependents.[46] Though they later took on ceremonial functions, many of the buildings in this area retained their original function to a considerable degree, as the example of the Duhaysha Hall shows.

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44   Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 26.
45   The tradition of holding *majālis* in the citadel was continued by the Ottoman governors of Egypt, cf. Hanna, *Books* 75.
46   Cf. section 3.5 above.

This building, which earlier sultans had used as a "living room,"[47] served al-Ghawrī not only as a place for consultations and other gatherings with his highest *amīr*s and other officials,[48] but also as a dining room[49] and as a place of retreat, especially in times of crisis. When al-Ghawrī contracted an eye infection in Rabīʿ I 919/May 1513, he shunned all political activities in front of larger audiences and locked himself up for several days in the Duhaysha Hall.[50] Arguably, the sultan considered this building a safe personal space where he could conceal himself while he was not in full command of his physical abilities. Similarly, the sultan retreated to the Duhaysha Hall to recover and plan his next steps after he received proof that the Ottomans had killed his ally and client ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla.[51] In another instance, the sultan went to the Duhaysha Hall when he feared that his *mamlūk*s would become mutinous again. Ibn Iyās wrote: "He entered the Duhaysha and hid himself from the people (*iḥtajaba ʿan al-nās*)."[52] Access to the Duhaysha Hall was regulated in the late Mamluk period by a doorman (*bawwāb*) who became so influential that people bribed him to help them in acquiring the offices they strived for.[53] Behrens-Abouseif calls the Duhaysha Hall the ruler's "private apartment"[54] when it was originally built in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century and it appears that the hall continued to be used for more or less the same purpose almost two hundred years later.

Yet still, the Duhaysha Hall, a distinctly personal space that served the ruler as a retreat in times of trial, was chosen as the setting of the *majālis* from mid-Jumādā II 911/mid-November 1505 onward. We cannot explain the holding of meetings there and in neighboring courtly spaces merely as a matter of convenience for the sultan. Rather, we can find at least five other, mutually interrelated explanations that are linked to the symbolic significance of these locations and their role in the acts of communication that took place there:

(1)   By holding the *majālis* in his personal space, the sultan underlined the connection between the events and himself as a ruler and a human being. He made clear that any merit coming from these sessions—be it educational, religious, or political—would reflect directly on him, and that the

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47   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 55.
48   Cf., e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 14, 29, 51, 120, 146, 169.
49   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 281.
50   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 307. See also, e.g., Petry, *Twilight* 197.
51   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 463. See also, e.g., Petry, *Twilight* 213.
52   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 430.
53   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 389 (example from Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy's reign); iv, 484; v, 33, 51–2, 81, 108. On access to the Duhaysha Hall as a special privilege, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 34.
54   Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 55.

majālis were fully and completely *his* events, regardless of who else took part in them.

(2)   When selecting the Baysariyya Hall and Duhaysha Hall as settings for his salons, the sultan established a connection between the *majālis* and another important aspect of the representation of his rule, namely his construction activities. This becomes clear from the fact that *majālis* sessions took place in these buildings immediately after their renovations, done on the sultan's behalf, had been completed. The choice of these locales allowed the sultan to showcase to selected members of his court society the result of his efforts to embellish the citadel. At the same time, he could hope that the intellectual character of these sessions would attach a new layer of meaning to these buildings, turning them into places for the transmission of knowledge, in addition to their other political and residential functions. By convening his *majālis* there, al-Ghawrī appeared as a ruler who dedicated himself in an exemplary fashion both to the material world of stones and walls, and to the immaterial world of learning and scholarship, which became interrelated through his *majālis*.

(3)   Another advantage of having the *majālis* in his personal space was that the sultan and those around him could control exactly who participated or witnessed these communicative events. Consequently, no unintended audience could complicate the communication among the *majālis* attendees.

(4)   Given that access to rulers is a valuable resource and a specific kind of social capital members of court societies compete for, we may assume that the sultan held the *majālis* in his personal space in order to have an opportunity to grant or withhold rewards to members of his court by allowing or forbidding them to take part in these events. One can imagine that many members of al-Ghawrī's court hoped for an invitation to converse with the sultan on an intimate basis, prove himself as a valuable conversationalist, and establish or further patronage relations with the ruler. However, al-Ghawrī could also revoke the favor of welcoming a person into his *majālis*, as is clear from the example of al-Sharīf, whom the sultan expelled from his presence for his inglorious role in a *majālis* debate.[55]

(5)   The ability to regulate access to his *majālis* moreover provided the sultan with the opportunity to present himself as a ruler interested in open discussions and able to stand criticism. For example, if members of his court

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[55]   For a similar case, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 17, 20.

society corrected the sultan's understanding of *fiqh* questions in front of large audiences, it could have severely negative consequences. However, such situations, which according to al-Sharīf actually took place,[56] were much less problematic in the relatively intimate atmosphere of the *majālis*.

Regrettably, we know nothing about the relative spatial positions of the attendees of the *majālis*, but it is clear from our sources that at least some participants sat during these events.[57] Given that seating orders and similar arrangements were important ways to express social status in Mamluk,[58] as well as in other Islamicate[59] and non-Islamicate[60] societies, we can assume that the attendees in the sultan's salons did not take seats randomly.

There is better evidence for other aspects of the etiquette of the *majālis*. According to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, whenever a participant posed a question that no one could answer, those present recited the first sura of the Quran to signal their inability to give a reply.[61] The same sura was recited for the benefit of deceased persons that members of the *majālis* wanted to honor.[62]

According to the *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, not every *majālis* discussion began with a question in the strict grammatical sense. Sometimes, participants merely presented problems for those present to consider.[63] Moreover, if a clear question was posed, the conversation often did not end with a single reply, as the attendees could give numerous alternative answers.[64] It was also possible to formulate critical follow-up questions or even point out mistakes in

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56   Cf. section 3.1.5 above.

57   Cf., e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 231; (ed. ʿAzzām) 112.

58   Cf., e.g., Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 159–61; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 80–2; Wollina, *Alltag* 170; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 388; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1985.

59   Cf., e.g., El Cheikh, Abbasid and Byzantine Courts 526; El Cheikh, Prince 210; Hirschler, *Word* 46–51; Gronke, Courts 368; Pfeifer, Encounter 226; Subtelny, *Circles* 162–3; Khalidi, *Thought* 189; Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Gentleman* 166–7; Kollatz, *Inspiration* 95–9.

60   Cf., e.g., Althoff, Demonstration 46; Althoff, Huld 218; Althoff, Einleitung 12; Paravicini, Zeremoniell 20–1; Weller, Ordnen 202–3.

61   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7, 13, 27; (ed. ʿAzzām) 6, 11.

62   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 19, 82, 143; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18, 54. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 26. For an anonymous work from al-Ghawrī's library on the first sura of the Quran entitled *Kitāb al-Faḍāʾil al-jāmiʿa fī asrār al-Fātiḥa*, see the lavishly decorated and multi-color manuscript MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Revan 191. Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* i, 560, attributes the authorship of this work to al-Ghawrī. An examination of the manuscript and its content did not corroborate this attribution.

63   See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 25.

64   Note, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 52–3 and 220–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 100–1, where in both cases five different answers are given to the same question.

the views of other participants, including the sultan.[65] Sometimes, members of the sultan's circle would bring books to the sessions so that those present could read them aloud and discuss their contents.[66] If necessary, a topic not fully covered during a single *majlis* could be brought up again in a subsequent one.[67]

Disputants in the *majālis* were expected to follow an ethical system that valued learning and the transmission of knowledge over quarreling and quibbling. During a debate, when a *majālis* attendee adduced evidence from a book that supported his opinion but was considered permeated by Mu'tazilī thought and thus inadmissible, the sultan, who took great interest in the impeccable religious character of his salons, reacted harshly.[68] To his mind, the attendee had not intended to make a scholarly contribution to the debate, but merely wanted to show off. According to *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the sultan admonished the man with the following words: "You fool, your motivation [in citing this work] is only self-aggrandizement (*mukābara*), and not learned inquiry (*baḥth*) or scholarly disputation (*munāẓara*)."[69] Thus, it seems that the sultan demanded that *majālis* members make contributions that were in line with the general scholarly objectives of the events.

Moreover, participants of the *majālis* were expected not to carelessly disclose what took place during these events. In one instance, al-Ghawrī severely rebuked an attendee who had related "the secrets of the lofty *majālis* among the people."[70] This suggests that the ruler viewed his *majālis* as, at least in part, a secluded communicative space that allowed him and his interlocutors to have potentially confidential discussions.[71] The fact that certain practices, such as dancing, were considered unseemly in the *majālis* confirms their serious character.[72]

The *majālis* were multilingual events, as *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* states that recitations were made during these sessions in every language (*her dilce*)—meaning,

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65   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 23, 50, 80–1, 215–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18–9. See also, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 143, 148, 172–3. On mistakes, gaffes, and slips in ʿAbbasid courtly communication, see Pomerantz, Error.

66   Cf. section 6.3.4 below.

67   See sections 4.2.2 and 6.2.3 below for examples.

68   See sections 4.2.2 below for the details of the debate.

69   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 262; (ed. ʿAzzām) 139.

70   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 265; (ed. ʿAzzām) 142.

71   Shīrvānlı Ḥaṭiboğlu Ḥabībullāh's collection of forty *ḥadīth*s dedicated to the sultan includes the tradition "*Majālis* are confidential," Ceyhan (ed.), Kırk hadis 13. On the confidentiality of *majālis* proceedings, see also Forster, *Wissensvermittlung* 119–20, 202.

72   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 102; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34.

at least, Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish.[73] Nevertheless, Arabic was the predominant language in the *majālis*, as several observations confirm:

(1) Apart from exceptions such as the sultan and al-Sharīf, the biographies of all the regular local attendees of the *majālis* suggest that they were native speakers of Arabic and there is no evidence that many participants were able to converse in a foreign language. Both al-Ghawrī and al-Sharīf, however, had the necessary Arabic language skills to make conversation in this language, as demonstrated above.

(2) *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* explicitly mentions when a *majālis* participant used a language other than Arabic. By implication, we can assume that all other statements were in Arabic.[74]

(3) In one instance, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presents al-Ghawrī as correcting the first-person narrator's Arabic by recommending the use of more technical terminology.[75] This suggests that the original conversation was held in Arabic.

(4) The clear majority of questions discussed in the salons pertained to topics of religious scholarship. Even in primarily Turkic language societies such as the Ottoman one, Arabic long retained its status as the most important language in the field of Islamic learning. Arabic was thus the most appropriate language for the religious topics debated in the salons.[76]

(5) The accounts of the *majālis* exhibit intertextual relations primarily with other Arabic texts. If we assume that these intertextual relations are at least partly caused by the fact that the respective works were read aloud in the *majālis*, as noted above, then it seems plausible that Arabic must have been the main language of the literature quoted in the *majālis*.

Taken together, we can assume that most of the debates in the *majālis* took place in Arabic, although it is unclear in which variety. Moreover, we have to keep in mind that the almost exclusively Arabic character of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* may be because they were written by a native Arabic speaker(s). The multilingual character of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, which presents Arabic as the predominant, but not the exclusive, language of conversation, may reflect the character of the *majālis* more faithfully.[77]

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73   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1990. On the status of the Persian language in the *majālis*, see Mauder, Persian 386–8.

74   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 253, 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131, 134.

75   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 142.

76   For the Ottoman context, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 32, 94–5; Csirkés, Books 675.

77   On the multiplicity of languages in Mamluk society, see Eychenne, *Liens* 153–88.

With regard to the program of the *majālis*, if we view the conversations recounted for a typical *majlis* in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, and bear in mind that the average duration of a session was slightly more than two hours, we note a considerable mismatch: Even if *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* only provides the essence of the discussions, it is difficult to see how these debates could last for so long. If we accept the reliability of the data on the durations of the *majālis* given in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we are led to wonder what else took place during these sessions.

It seems that the *majālis* attendees spent at least part of their time eating. Since serving food was not uncommon in Islamicate *majālis*[78] and the inhabitants of Mamluk Egypt usually had their main meal in the evening,[79] it is not surprising that at least in one instance, the participants in al-Ghawrī's salons enjoyed a sweetmeat known as *fālūdaj* together.[80] *Fālūdaj* or *fālūdhaj* was a sweet dish made of wheat, butter, and honey[81] that appears in Arabic literature as a delicacy served to rulers.[82] During another meeting, the sultan commented on the thyme that was apparently offered.[83]

It would seem that wine drinking, which constituted another common element of many Islamicate *majālis*, did not take place during al-Ghawrī's salons.[84] There is nothing in our sources indicating that wine or containers for it were present. Moreover, the Quranic prohibition of wine drinking was a recurring topic in the *majālis*,[85] as were the moral dangers associated with this beverage.[86] Drinking wine while discussing these topics would have been in conflict with the image of piety that the sultan wanted to convey of himself.[87]

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78   Cf. section 1.2.5 above. On eating and drinking in Ottoman *majālis*, see Ertuğ, Entertaining 138–9; and in Persianate South Asian *majālis*, see Flatt, *Courts* 118.

79   Lewicka, *Food* 414.

80   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 253; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 25. For sweetmeats in a Timurid *majlis*, see Subtelny, Scenes 145.

81   Van Gelder, *Banquet* 25, 44. On *fālūdhaj*, see Lewicka, *Food* 291, 310–1.

82   Van Gelder, *Banquet* 20–1, 25.

83   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 188; (ed. ʿAzzām) 76. On thyme in Mamluk cuisine, see Lewicka, *Food* 208, 215, 234, 241–2, 293–4, 297, 331–2, 336, 344.

84   See also Irwin, *Night* 441. On wine drinking and alcohol consumption in Mamluk society more broadly, see, e.g., Lewicka, *Food* 483–550; Levanoni, Food 220; Wollina, *Alltag* 176–83. On wine drinking in Ottoman *majālis*, see Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Gentleman* 111–3; Ertuğ, Entertaining 126, 138; and in Persianate contexts, see Ahmed, *Islam* 64–5; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 190; Flatt, *Courts* 115–9.

85   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 23, 39, 117; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 35, 87, 117, 212–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 15; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 58ᵛ–59ʳ.

86   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 213–4; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 82ᵛ–83ʳ.

87   On this point, see section 5.2 below.

Furthermore, al-Sharīf is presented as stating that he preferred al-Ghawrī's *majālis* over others he had attended because the participants in the latter regularly consumed wine.[88] Finally, al-Ghawrī is known to have been particularly staunch in his attempts to curb wine drinking among his subjects.[89]

Instead of drinking wine, al-Ghawrī and his intimates evidently spent their time, in part, performing their ritual prayers; this is suggested by the fact that for most *majālis*, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions the presence of a prayer leader (*imām*). We cannot say with certainty which prayer the *imām* led, but given what is known about the timing of the *majālis*, it seems plausible that the attendees performed the *ʿishāʾ* prayers together.[90]

Another important aspect of the *majālis* about which our main sources are, however, almost completely silent, was music. Al-Ghawrī was a connoisseur of music: Musicians were among the sultan's close companions (*muqarrabūn*)[91] and intimates (*khawāṣṣ*)[92], they entertained him on various occasions,[93] and accompanied him on military expeditions, such as the inspection trip to Alexandria[94] and his final march to Syria.[95] In his obituary of al-Ghawrī, Ibn Iyās mentions that the sultan "loved to listen to instruments and singing."[96] Similarly, al-Malaṭī states that al-Ghawrī "had arrived at the highest knowledge in the science of music (*ʿilm al-musīqā*)."[97] Hence, it comes as no surprise that music was also an important feature of the salons al-Ghawrī convened.[98]

Yet, because music seems to fall beyond the scholarly interests of our main sources, they do not say much about it. Rather, we must rely on *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, which speaks at length about the singers and musicians in the salons,

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88   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 105. There is also no evidence that *qūmiz*, an alcoholic drink made from horse milk, was served during the *majālis*.

89   Cf. Lewicka, *Food* 491–2, 533, 545.

90   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 244; (ed. ʿAzzām) 123, explicitly mentions the *ʿishāʾ* prayer in the context of a *majlis* held on the occasion of the sultan's birthday, but it is unclear whether this information applies to other *majālis*, too. Flemming assumed that each *majlis* began with a ritual prayer, cf. Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24–5.

91   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 401.

92   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1985.

93   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 337, 396–7, 467–8, 473–4.

94   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 415.

95   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 35.

96   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

97   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 7ᵛ. On Mamluk music theory, see Wright, *Music*.

98   On al-Ghawrī's interest in music, see also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 73, 75–6; Mardam Bik, *al-Malik* 21–3; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 176–7. On music in Ottoman *majālis*, see Ertuğ, Entertaining 124, 133–5; and in Persianate *majālis*, see Ahmed, *Islam* 425–30; Flatt, *Courts* 109–11.

whom it likens to nightingales (*bülbüller*).[99] While it is difficult so say how much time the *majālis* attendees dedicated to musical performances, *Şāhnā-me-yi Türkī* suggests that they were central elements of the events. Yet, we have hardly any information on which musical instruments were used, if at all, and who exactly participated in the performances.

To sum up, al-Ghawrī's *majālis* constituted communicative events that qualify as ceremonies as defined above.[100] They were regular events that usually took place every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday according to a largely standardized schedule; they were held in courtly spaces which held symbolic meaning, such as the Duhaysha Hall and Baysariyya Hall; and they involved sequences of actions with symbolic significance, such as the performance of ritual prayers, as well as scholarly discussions, and entertaining elements, such as eating and listening to music. Moreover, they formed part of the sultan's endeavors to represent his rule and interact with the members of his court society in a way that suited his personal and political interests. Hence, the question of who participated in these events is of central importance for our understanding of late Mamluk court life under al-Ghawrī.

4.1.2   *The Participants in al-Ghawrī's* majālis

Access to al-Ghawrī's *majālis* constituted a valuable resource that was only available to a limited number of people. Appendix 2 provides a list of all people known by name who might have attended these events. Among these 60 people—all of whom were Muslims—20 appear in our sources as attending at least three sessions and are thus considered regular participants. There is evidence that 23 other individuals participated in at least one or two meetings. For 17 people, the available information is inconclusive, so we are unable to determine whether they took part in the sessions or were only referred to by attendees.

Prima facie, these figures suggest a high level of fluctuation among *majālis* attendees, with occasional participants outnumbering regulars. Yet, we should not over-interpret these numbers, as they are mainly based on circumstantial and implicit information. It is entirely possible that many of the occasional participants attended the *majālis* regularly.

If we define al-Ghawrī's court society according to Konrad, as a group of people that "participates in the occasions wherein the ruler holds court,"[101]

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99   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1991–2.

100   See section 1.2.3 above.

101   Konrad, Patterns 237. See also Asch, *Hof* 14; Konrad, Überlegungen 1057.

the attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* clearly fall into this social group. It goes without saying that the sultan's court society was not limited to these people, as there were many others who regularly took part in al-Ghawrī's courtly events but do not appear among the members of his salons.[102] Still, the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* are especially important for our understanding of the sultan's court, as they kept particularly intimate company with the ruler and thus formed one of the innermost circles of his court society.

For the sake of presentation, we can divide the attendees of the *majālis* into four groups: (1) the host, (2) local participants, such as Mamluk scholars and officeholders, (3) guests, including itinerant scholars, envoys, and foreign political dignitaries, and (4) people on the periphery, for example, musicians, servants, *mamlūk*s, and jesters. Clearly, there is overlap between these heuristic categories: A person who appears in the *majālis* mainly as a musician and is thus counted as part of group 4 might also have acquired some fame as a learned man and could therefore also be grouped into categories 2 or 3. Similarly, it is not always easy to draw a clear line between local and itinerant scholars, given the high level of mobility among *ʿulamāʾ* of the late Islamicate middle period.

In what follows, we do not discuss all participants with the same level of detail, but focus on selected examples from each group to expound on who communicated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* with whom and in front of what kind of audience.

4.1.2.1   The Host: Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī

As the host of the salons, Sultan al-Ghawrī was the center of the *majālis*. His intellectual interests apparently shaped the topics of many discussions and his behavior had a pivotal influence on what other members did and said.

The present chapter does not seek to repeat Carl Petry's seminal work and provide a full-fledged biography of al-Ghawrī.[103] Rather, it focuses specifically on (1) al-Ghawrī's intellectual formation and his academic interests and (2) his communicative role in the *majālis* with regard to learning and the transmission of knowledge.

In studying the first of these topics, we face a methodological problem: As shown above,[104] our main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were interested in

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102   Note especially Ibn Iyās' lists of leading officeholders in the Mamluk Sultanate, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 30–5, 111–2, 357–8, 434–5; v, 3–6. Many of the persons Ibn Iyās mentions in these passages belonged qua office to al-Ghawrī's court society.

103   See esp. Petry, *Twilight* 119–232; as well as Petry, *Protectors* 20–6.

104   Cf. section 3.1.5 above.

presenting al-Ghawrī as a perfect example of the sultanic virtues of knowledge and wisdom. Hence, it is particularly difficult to assess their reliability in relation to the sultan's scholarly and intellectual abilities. For this reason, we begin our analysis with information from other sources that we have no reason to suspect of presenting overly positive views of al-Ghawrī's academic achievements. In a second step, we analyze whether the information from these ancillary sources matches the data in our main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and related texts.

Among Ibn Iyās' comments on al-Ghawrī's intellectual interests and skills, by far the most informative elements are from the first of the two obituaries of the sultan in Ibn Iyās' chronicle.[105] He writes:

> What counts among his good qualities is that he had a pleasant character (*khalq*). He kept himself under control when he was angry and did not have fits of rage despite the vigor of his temper. Moreover, he believed strongly in the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*) and the mendicants (*fuqarāʾ*), and he knew the rank of the people according to their social position. He kept himself from insulting people [even] if he was very angry. He had an understanding of poetry and loved to listen to musical instruments and singing. He himself composed Turkic verses. He was very fond of the recitation of works of history (*tawārīkh*), biographies (*siyar*), and collections of poetry (*dawāwīn al-ashʿār*). He was close to the members of the elite and used to love jesting and merrymaking [with them] in his *majlis*, being of refined nature. He was complaisant and placid in contrast to the nature of the Turks. He was free of haughtiness, arrogance, and overbearing impertinence, in contrast to the usual behavior of rulers.[106]

Ibn Iyās counterbalances this list of the sultan's virtues with an even longer list of vices, paying special attention to his financial misdeeds.[107] Nevertheless, the fact remains that the chronicler also praises the sultan at length, singling out his interest in poetry, music, history, and biographical literature as particularly noteworthy. Thus, even an author as ill-disposed toward al-Ghawrī as Ibn Iyās conceded to him a certain level of competence in scholarly and literary mat-

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105   For other relevant passages, see, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 109, 158, on the sultan's interest in alchemy.

106   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89. See also Petry, *Twilight* 119–20; section 6.2.2 below.

107   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89–92. See also Petry, *Twilight* 120–2.

ters. This is not to be taken for granted, as earlier Mamluk historiographers did not hesitate to point out if a ruler was illiterate or unlettered.[108]

Ibn Iyās' account is corroborated by al-Ghawrī's apparently genuine Ottoman Turkish and Arabic poems, which provide the following information on al-Ghawrī's intellectual interests and abilities.[109]

(1) The sultan was literate in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian[110] and was able to compose poetry in these languages.[111] Given that his mother tongue was a form of Circassian, he must have learned all these languages later in his life. These language skills not only allowed al-Ghawrī to support and maintain a highly diverse cultural life at his court,[112] but also enabled him to communicate with people from all over the Islamicate world. As Muhsin al-Musawi noted, this was a necessary qualification for Muslim rulers who claimed suzerainty over the Islamicate ecumene at large.[113]

(2) Al-Ghawrī's poems and here especially his Ottoman Turkish texts abound with intertextual references to other literary works in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. They show that the sultan possessed a knowledge of these literatures in general and their poetic traditions in particular—an observation that corresponds well with Ibn Iyās' statement that al-Ghawrī was "very fond of the recitation of […] collections of poetry."[114]

References to other literary works appear in al-Ghawrī's poetic corpus in various forms. First, there are passages that mention dramatis personae known from other literary works, such as the lovers Majnūn and Laylā[115] or the figure of Dimna from *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.[116] Second, the sultan sometimes refers to earlier authors by name. He uses this literary device primarily in the case of celebrated Persian poets, such as Niẓāmī (d. before 613/1217),[117] Kamāl Khujandī (d. 803/1400–1),[118] and Saʿdī (d. 691/1292),[119] as well as the Ottoman poet Şeyhī (d. ca. 834/1431).[120]

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108   See, e.g., Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 10.

109   For the following observations, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

110   Cf., e.g., the Persian sections in Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 76, 124. See also Flemming, Perser 84–5.

111   See sections 3.2.7 and 3.3.1 above.

112   Haarmann, Miṣr 175.

113   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 76.

114   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

115   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 68–9, 76, 90, 118, 124, 134. On al-Ghawrī's familiarity with love poetry, see also Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 106.

116   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 62, 113.

117   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 105, 145.

118   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 93, 105, 135, 145.

119   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 93, 135. Note also Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 123.

120   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 100, 140.

Al-Ghawrī's third and most important method of establishing intertextual relations with the works of other authors is the *naẓīra* or counterpart poem, written to surpass an earlier poetic composition. The Berlin manuscript of al-Ghawrī's Ottoman Turkish *dīwān* includes the original poems the sultan tried to surpass, together with his *naẓīra*s, to make the intertextual relationship between the texts unmistakable. As his models, al-Ghawrī took Turkic language authors such as Ḥasanoğlu (fl. eighth/fourteenth century),[121] Şeyhoğlu (d. between 804/1401 and 812/1409),[122] Nesīmī (d. ca. 807/1404–5),[123] Aḥmedī (d. 816/1413),[124] Şeyhī,[125] and prince Cem (d. 900/1495),[126] as well as the Persian poets Niẓāmī[127] and Ḥāfiẓ (d. 792/1390).[128] As Barbara Flemming highlighted, the sultan selected poems for his *naẓīra*s that show that he was "up to date [in contemporaneous literature], albeit possibly with a small time lag."[129]

(3) Al-Ghawrī's poems attest to his knowledge of the Quran and religious concepts.[130] They feature quotations from the Quran[131] and several *ḥadīth*s,[132]

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121 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 128. See also Flemming, Gazel; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24.

122 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 122.

123 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 132. See also D'hulster, Sitting 252; Norris, Aspects 163–9; Flemming, Perser 84.

124 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 122, 126, 130. See also D'hulster, Sitting 252.

125 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 134.

126 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 135. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23; Flemming, Perser 85; D'hulster, Sitting 252.

127 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 133. See also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23.

128 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 129.

129 Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 23. We do not have comparable references from al-Ghawrī's Arabic poetry.

130 Al-Ghawrī's library contained multiple Quran copies, although it is impossible to ascertain at this point whether the sultan ever used any of these copies. (Partial) copies known to have belonged to al-Ghawrī include MS Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Arabic 42 (see Mingana, *Catalogue* 41–3); MS Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, R 73 [non vidi] (see Ohta, Bindings 216, 220); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Medine 79 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* i, 132); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Emanet Hazinesi 90 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* i, 33; Flemming, Activities 258); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Revan 18 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* i, 75; Flemming, Activities 254). For an anonymous work on the special qualities of the Quran entitled *Khawāṣṣ kitāb al-ʿazīz* that was produced for al-Ghawrī's library, see MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 137 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 313; Ohta, Bindings 219).

131 E.g., al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 24ʳ; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fol. 79ᵛ; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 56–8, 107–10.

132 E.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 60–1, 63, 70–1, 111, 113–4, 119–20.

as well as references to technical theological terminology, as in the following example:

> Oh, Creator of creation, the One who is worshiped eternally.
> Single, pre-eternal (*ḳadīm*), ever-living, eternal (*ebed*), the Lord of
>   Majesty.
> The intellects (*ʿuḳūl*) became bewildered in thinking of Your essence
>   (*ẕāt*).
> Who has the ability to describe Your attributes (*ṣifāt*)?[133]

By using terms such as "pre-eternal," "intellects," "essence," and "attributes," al-Ghawrī demonstrated that he knew enough about the tradition of *kalām* to integrate key elements of its terminology into his verses.[134] The fact that all the pertinent terms are Arabic loanwords underlines their technical character in what is otherwise an Ottoman Turkish text. Others poems of al-Ghawrī demonstrate his familiarity with key Sufi concepts, as discussed below.[135]

(4) Al-Ghawrī was familiar with the names and biographies of important figures of Islamic and pre-Islamic history. References to the first four caliphs, such as the following, appear in numerous poems:

> Sıddīḳ and ʿÖmer are the sincere friends of God.
> From us, praise be to the souls of these perfect people.
> Osmān and ʿAlī are the people of modesty and forbearance.
> He [that is, ʿAlī] is the lion of war and battle with a thousand strikes.[136]

Other famous figures from early Islamic history that appear in the ruler's verses include the Prophet Muḥammad's muezzin Bilāl (d. between 17/638 and 21/642),[137] his adversary Abū Jahl (d. 2/624),[138] and his grandchildren al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.[139]

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133 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 55, 106. I quote Yalçın's translation.
134 For a similar case, see, e.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 57, 109. On poetry using *kalām* terminology, see Ahmed, *Islam* 90–1; al-Musawi, *Republic* 198–9, 201.
135 See section 5.1.2 below.
136 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 63, 114. I quote Yalçın's translation with slight modifications. See also, e.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 55, 58, 61–2, 107, 110, 113; al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 22ʳ.
137 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 64, 115.
138 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 64, 115.
139 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 68, 117.

Al-Ghawrī's poems also attest to his knowledge of Muḥammad's bio-graphy.[140] Important events in the Prophet's *sīra*, such as his ascension to heaven[141] or the splitting of the moon,[142] are noted in the verses, as are the vari-ous names by which the Prophet is known.[143] The only figure from later periods of history mentioned repeatedly in the poems is the famous Sufi Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922),[144] a fact that highlights their Sufi character.[145] Pre-Islamic history is represented by prophets such as Adam,[146] al-Khiḍr,[147] Moses,[148] and Joseph[149] and characters from Persian lore, such as the hero Rustam or Kay, the progenitor of the mythical dynasty of the Kaynanids.[150]

Taken together, the evidence from Ibn Iyās—an author who cannot be sus-pected of casting too positive a light on al-Ghawrī—and the sultan's poems shows that al-Ghawrī was well-versed in diverse fields of Islamicate learning. In particular, he was knowledgeable in history, the stories of the prophets before Muḥammad, the latter's *sīra*, the Quran, prophetic traditions, *kalām* termino-logy, and various forms of literature.

These data on al-Ghawrī's scholarly interests and erudition from sources that cannot easily be dismissed for flattery match quite closely the image of al-Ghawrī in the *majālis* accounts. As the sultan's contributions to the *majālis* debates are reviewed in detail below for the various pertinent fields of learn-ing,[151] here it suffices to mention that the *majālis* works present the ruler as knowledgeable in the very disciplines that are highlighted by Ibn Iyās and the poems examined, albeit with one important addition: *fiqh*. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in particular show the ruler as asking or—though less often—answering dozens of questions on jurisprudence. This field

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140   We furthermore know of a short work on the Prophet's genealogy entitled *Shajarat al-nasab al-sharīf al-nabawī* (Tree of the noble prophetic genealogy) that is attributed to al-Ghawrī and preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2798 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 429–30; Ohta, Bindings 219). Only a detailed study of this text, which cannot be undertaken here, will make it possible to assess the validity of its attribution to the sultan.

141   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 60, 68, 112, 118.

142   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 61, 63, 113–4.

143   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 57, 102, 109, 142.

144   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 71, 73, 77, 105, 120, 122, 125, 144.

145   See section 5.1.2 below.

146   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 66, 69, 73, 79, 116, 118, 121, 126.

147   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 57, 78, 90, 93, 97–8, 109, 125, 133, 135, 138–9.

148   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 56, 58, 66, 73, 92, 107, 110, 116, 121, 135.

149   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 66, 92, 97, 101, 116, 135, 138, 141.

150   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 100, 140.

151   See sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.9 below.

is notably absent from Ibn Iyās' discussion of the sultan's interests and the latter's poetry. In both cases, the silence is explainable: Throughout Ibn Iyās' account of al-Ghawrī's reign, the latter's injustice (*ẓulm*) is a central leitmotiv. Ibn Iyās would have contradicted this central element of his image of al-Ghawrī by noting his interest in *fiqh*, that is, the field of knowledge that should guarantee that all members of the Muslim community receive what is rightly due to them. Al-Ghawrī's interest in *fiqh*, as indicated by the sources on his *majālis*, simply did not fit into Ibn Iyās' master narrative about the sultan's reign. As for al-Ghawrī's poetry, it is difficult to see how references to *fiqh* could appear in them at all, given their focus on Sufism. Hence, the fact that neither Ibn Iyās nor the sultan's poems corroborate his interest in *fiqh* is of very limited significance.

Moreover, with the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* and *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*, we have two further sources indicating that *fiqh* was a focus of the sultan's attention. The former text singles out *fiqh* as one of the disciplines al-Ghawrī was especially concerned with, together with history, anecdotal literature (*ḥikāyāt*), and Quranic studies.[152] *Al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* speaks about the sultan's interest in the study of the law as well as in Quranic studies, prophetic traditions, and history.[153] However, it must be acknowledged that, since the translator of the *Shāhnāme* and the author of *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* were interested in presenting al-Ghawrī as a knowledgeable and wise ruler, like the authors of the *majālis* accounts, their testimonies are of little value as independent confirmations of the sultan's scholarly activities.

Apart from the issue of al-Ghawrī's legal competence, it is clear that the sultan possessed considerable cultural capital in other fields of knowledge. The question of how the ruler acquired this capital leads us to an examination of his early life and career. Most of our sources, however, say little about the sultan's early years, probably because he only entered the ruling circles of the Mamluk Sultanate, and thus became a person of note, when he was about fifty years old.

The second volume of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is the only source that provides a detailed, albeit highly selective narrative of al-Ghawrī's early biography. According to this work, al-Ghawrī was born into a family of Circassian notables[154] in 848/1444–5.[155] Orphaned as a teenager, he left his homeland in 871/1466–7 for Egypt, where he became one of Sultan Qāytbāy's *mamlūk*s and began his formal education in the al-Ghawr Barracks in the citadel, and from

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152 Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1993.
153 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 123ʳ, 243ʳ, 284ʳ, 309ᵛ.
154 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 63ʳ.
155 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 51ᵛ–5ʳv.

this he received his *nisba*.[156] His first teacher was a Mālikī jurist (*faqīh*) by the name of Sirāj al-Dīn who died in 901/1495–6.[157] According to what we know about the education of *mamlūk*s, Sirāj al-Dīn must have taught al-Ghawrī, inter alia, the Quran and jurisprudence. *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* presents al-Ghawrī as a particularly gifted student who assisted his fellow recruits in their studies: "Our lord the sultan—may his victory be glorious—was the expert (*ʿārif*) of [his] barracks and taught them [that is, the other recruits] writing (*kitāba*), wisdom (*ḥikma*), religion (*dīn*), faith (*īmān*), the ritual prayer, and the Quran."[158]

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya describes al-Ghawrī as furthering his intellectual interests after his manumission. According to the text, while al-Ghawrī was on garrison duty in Mecca, a scholar asked him to correct the faulty Quran reading of one of his fellow soldiers.[159] Later on, the source mentions that al-Ghawrī borrowed a multi-volume copy of the *Sīrat Baybars* from a scholar and read it twice.[160] Finally, we have a reference to the future ruler working on his Ottoman Turkish *dīwān* while serving as governor of the border town of Malatya.[161]

The picture emerging from *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* about the sultan's education and interests during his military career matches what we know about his later intellectual activities and explains, at least in part, how he accumulated his cultural capital. However, we must not naively accept the statements of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* on the sultan's early life as factual, given that we know his intention for composing this text involved gaining al-Ghawrī's favor.

With regard to the sultan's role in his *majālis*, we can base our analysis on several sources. In all of them, the sultan is clearly presented as the convener, organizer, and highest-ranking member of the salons. On a textual level, the accounts of his *majālis* reaffirm the ruler's supreme position on almost every page by continually using his customary title of *mawlānā l-sulṭān* (our lord the sultan).[162] We may assume that the same title was also used by the *majālis* participants when they addressed al-Ghawrī, thus clearly indicating the difference of status between the latter and all other attendees, even during academic debate.

As discussed above, our main sources present the ruler as by far the most active participant in the *majālis*, with his contributions outnumbering those of the

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156   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 64ʳ–65ʳ.
157   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 65ᵛ. I could not locate any other reference to this man.
158   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 67ᵛ.
159   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 71ʳ.
160   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 75ᵛ.
161   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 89ʳ–89ᵛ. See also Yavuz (ed.), *Gavrî'nin Türkçe Dîvânı* 153.
162   On this title, see, e.g., al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 67; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, *passim*; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 140, 345, 351; v, 463; Sobernheim, *Inschriften* 25–8.

second most active named disputant by a ratio of three to one in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and eight to one in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.[163] In both works, the number of the sultan's replies is slightly higher than that of his questions. Thus, readers get the impression that the sultan not only raises significant points, but also gives replies to problems brought up by other participants. Furthermore, both works narrate several instances in which the sultan poses a question and then answers it himself, as no other attendee is able to do so.[164] In these instances, the sultan proves that he is intellectually superior to the scholars gathered there. Similarly, in the texts, the sultan sometimes appears to be giving the final and definitive answer on questions for which several possible solutions are brought forth,[165] or, more rarely, to be deciding which of the replies presented is the best,[166] again demonstrating his intellectual preeminence. Yet, when analyzing these features of our sources, it is critical to take into account what we know about their background in general and the ways they attribute statements to specific *majālis* participants. As we have seen, these attributions vary significantly, even in otherwise parallel passages.[167]

Regarding the questions posed by the sultan, Flemming assumed that al-Ghawrī regularly set the general topic of the *majālis* through his initial query.[168] However, the textual evidence for this suggestion is mixed at best, given that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*—on which Flemming based her analysis—shows the sultan as posing the first question in only about 40 percent of all sessions. One passage in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* indicates that the sultan at times explicitly delegated the right to ask the first question to other participants.[169]

It bears reiteration that in interpreting the evidence regarding al-Ghawrī's involvement in his *majālis* debates, we must keep in mind that the authors of our sources were interested in presenting the sultan in general and his scholarly abilities in particular in as positive a light as possible. The fact that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, as two independent sources, offer matching images of the sultan's role in his salons is of limited significance here, given that both authors shared similar intentions in depicting the ruler. While

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163   See section 3.1.2.3 above.

164   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 12–3, 27, 30–1, 95, 112, 132; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–2, 32–3; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 13–4, 60–1, 86, 176; (ed. ʿAzzām) 52.

165   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 17, 22, 44–5, 75, 180; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 37, 73, 88–9, 137–8, 143–4, 213, 217, 281–2, 287, 292–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 86.

166   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 17–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–4.

167   Cf. section 3.1.5 above.

168   Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 25. See also Awad, Sultan 321; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 41.

169   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 77.

it seems certain that the sultan took an active part in the discussions that reflected his intellectual background and interests, the scope and significance of his participation are difficult to assess.

4.1.2.2   The Local Participants: Scholars and Officeholders

Before discussing the participation of local scholars and officeholders in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is helpful to reflect on the social roles and interrelationships between the high-ranking military and learned men in Mamluk times. Historians describe the relationship between the military and the intellectual elites of the sultanate as one of cooperation or even symbiosis.[170] Scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*)[171] served rulers as judges and administrators and acted as legal advisers and consultants.[172] Scholars also afforded religious guidance to members of the military, saw to their spiritual needs, and instructed them in the basics of religion.[173] Moreover, at times, *ʿulamāʾ* served as intermediaries between the military elite and the populace, mitigating, inter alia, the financial demands of the former toward the latter.[174] By interacting with and working for the military elite in these ways, *ʿulamāʾ* legitimated and stabilized Mamluk rule.[175]

The Mamluk military not only defended the *ʿulamāʾ*—like all inhabitants of the realm—against external threats, but also saw to their material needs.[176] By means of religious endowments (sg. *waqf*) especially, members of the military elite provided livelihoods to numerous *ʿulamāʾ* serving as administrative, religious, and educational personnel in endowed institutions.[177] Similarly, Mamluk sultans could see to the material well-being of learned men by appointing them as judges or hiring them as administrative officials, thus contributing to their "bureaucratization."[178]

Hence, we can conceptualize many interconnections between individual members of the Mamluk ruling military elite and the local learned elite as relationships of patronage. In such a patronage relationship a learned man usu-

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170   Lev, Relations 1; Berkey, Policy 19–20. See also Berkey, Policy 22; Hassan, *Longing* 67; Muhanna, *World* 85–7.

171   On the problem of defining this term, see, e.g., Lev, Relations 1–4; Winter, 'Ulama' 21–2.

172   Lev, Relations 15, 21–4; Winter, 'Ulama' 30. See also Fernandes, Qadis and Muftis 99–107.

173   Winter, 'Ulama' 27, 30. See also Lev, Relations 17–21; Berkey, Policy 20.

174   Lev, Relations 15, 18, 22, 24. See also Winter, 'Ulama' 31; Lapidus, *Cities, passim*; Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 130–1, 146–7.

175   Lev, Relations 10; Berkey, Policy 21. See also Winter, 'Ulama' 33.

176   Winter, 'Ulama' 27.

177   Lev, Relations 25. See also Winter, 'Ulama' 36; Berkey, Policy 17, 20; Little, Religion 169–70, 172.

178   Winter, 'Ulama' 25. See also Winter, 'Ulama' 35–6.

ally made his cultural capital available to his influential patron, who in turn compensated him with economic capital. Moreover, both participants in the exchange could allocate social capital by means of their patronage relation or act as patronage brokers.[179]

Competition constituted another basic driving force that shaped the social world of the *ʿulamāʾ*. As Michael Chamberlain demonstrated, often scholars stood in fierce competition for the paid positions (*manṣab*s) that became available through the patronage of members of the military elite.[180] In this competitive atmosphere, the basic prerequisite for success was the acquisition of cultural capital.[181] Although learning was not the only route to success, given that members of the military elite, who could be manipulated by way of intercession (*shafāʿa*), at times appointed and dismissed personnel as they pleased,[182] it was more than a simple precondition for the acquisition of a paid position: Cultural capital could be employed to outdo competitors and even disgrace them, especially during scholarly debates.[183] Courtly debates—such as those that took place in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*—could be seen as even more competitive than other scholarly disputations, given that not only the debate as a form of interaction, but also the court as its social context was characterized by high levels of competition and rivalry.[184]

We should understand the participation of local scholars and officeholders in the sultan's *majālis* against this background of military-scholarly symbiosis, patronage relations, and competition. The presence of such men in al-Ghawrī's salons comes as no surprise given their scholarly topics. Nevertheless, a closer look at scholars and administrators in the *majālis* and their communicative roles tells us much about the transmission of knowledge and learning in the sultan's court.

While the clear majority of those *majālis* participants that are known by name were local scholars and officeholders, members of this category are far from uniform. At least three different subgroups are discernible: (1) Scholars who occupied high-profile positions in the judiciary and the academic realm such as chief judges or *shaykh*s of renowned *madrasa*s. These men also often

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179   See also Berkey, Policy 20.

180   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 62–3. See also Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 91–100; Winter, 'Ulama' 25; Berkey, Policy 20; Eychenne, *Liens* 123–30, 226–30.

181   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 64–5.

182   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 95–7. On intercession in Mamluk times, see Marmon, Quality, esp. 129–39; van Steenbergen, *Order* 68–70.

183   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 164–5. See also Homerin, Study 15.

184   Daniel, *Hoftheater* 34. See also section 1.2.4 above. On the competitive character of Ottoman *majālis*, see Pfeifer, Encounter 222–3.

appear in chronicles and biographical works. (2) Prominent government offi-
cials, who, while not active primarily as judges or teachers, combined high
levels of cultural capital with influential administrative posts. References to
such men abound in chronicles and other historiographical works. (3) Minor
scholars and employees of the sultan who earned their livelihood by means of
their social capital, but did not hold high-ranking positions. The details of their
biographies are often unknown.

Members of the first category count among the *majālis* participants most
visible in our main sources. They include the Ḥanafī ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna
(d. 921/1515)[185] and the Shāfiʿī Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭawīl al-Qādirī
(d. 936/1530),[186] who served as chief judges of their *madhhab*s during al-
Ghawrī's reign, as well as Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf (d. 921/1516), who was
likewise chief judge under al-Ghawrī and functioned as Sufi *shaykh* of the lat-
ter's funeral complex. It is generally easy to explain how these men came into
close contact with al-Ghawrī: As chief judges, they owed their appointments
to the sultan and met him regularly, for instance during the ruler's traditional
gathering with the heads of the four *madhhab*s and the ʿAbbasid caliph at the
beginning of each month. As *shaykh* of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, Burhān
al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf received his investiture from the sultan.

However, the relations between these men and the sultan could be much
more complicated than their titles would lead us expect, as the examples of
Ibn Abī Sharīf and ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna make clear. The former bore the
name of Abū Isḥāq Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ʿAlī
al-Maqdisī and was born in 833/1429–30 or 836/1432–3 in Jerusalem. Having
first studied with his older brother, he later moved to Cairo where he learned
Shāfiʿī *fiqh* and related disciplines at the feet of some of the most distinguished
scholars of his *madhhab*. Moreover, he married the daughter of Sharaf al-Dīn
al-Munāwī (d. 871/1467), the chief judge of his school, and served as his deputy.
Known as a skilled jurisprudent, Ibn Abī Sharīf made a name for himself in the
Mamluk capital and acquired numerous administrative and educational posi-
tions.[187]

Ibn Abī Sharīf reached the pinnacle of his career in Dhū l-Ḥijja 906/June 1501
when al-Ghawrī appointed him Shāfiʿī chief judge. He retained this post until
Rabīʿ II 910/September 1504, when the sultan replaced him with another Shāfiʿī

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185   On him, see also section 3.1.2.3 above.
186   On him, see al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* ii, 45–6.
187   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 102. See also al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* i, 134–5; al-Munāwī, *al-
       Kawakib* iv, 6–7.

scholar, but recompensed him with the position of *shakyh* of the Sufis[188] of his funeral complex only a few weeks later in Jumādā I 910/October 1504, a position Ibn Abī Sharīf retained for about nine years.[189] It is not clear why al-Ghawrī dismissed him from his former office. Even Ibn Iyās, who was often very critical of al-Ghawrī's appointees, noted that Ibn Abī Sharīf had been qualified (*kaf'*) for the chief judgeship.[190] His discharge, however, must have been honorable as the sultan continued to consult him on legal matters.[191]

During his time as *shakyh* of the sultan's funeral complex known as al-Ghawriyya, Ibn Abī Sharīf participated in the sultan's salons. In the *majālis* accounts, he appears as one of the most important interlocutors of the sultan, and on several occasions he serves to certify the sultan's competence in religious and legal questions. *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* agree that Ibn Abī Sharīf once praised a reply by the sultan to a question of *ʿaqīda*, declaring his reply to be "extremely excellent" (*fī ghāyat al-ḥusn*)[192] and "brilliant" (*laṭīf*).[193] Elsewhere, he defended a reply given by the sultan regarding a similar question against possible objections.[194] The sultan, in turn, expressed his particular satisfaction with Ibn Abī Sharīf's interpretation of a Quranic verse.[195]

Our sources include Ibn Abī Sharīf's answers to multiple questions about Quranic exegesis,[196] Shāfiʿī jurisprudence,[197] and *kalām*,[198] yet he never appears posing a question. Rather, his main function is to reply to points raised by the sultan and, though less often, those brought by other attendees. The *majālis* accounts twice highlight Ibn Abī Sharīf's importance in this capacity by quoting *fatwā*s he produced in response to questions brought up in the salons.[199]

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188   On Ibn Abī Sharīf as a Sufi, see Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 91, 155, 460; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i, 61; al-Munawī, *al-Kawakib* iv, 7–8.

189   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 13, 66, 68–9; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 272; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 244.

190   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 13.

191   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 120–1.

192   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 6.

193   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3.

194   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 31.

195   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 160–1.

196   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 89, 108–9, 160–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 32; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 233–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 76–8.

197   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 229–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 109–10.

198   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 122–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 35–8.

199   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 229–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 109–10; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 122–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 35–8. See also section 5.1.4.4 below.

The relationship between al-Ghawrī and Ibn Abī Sharīf can be described as a quite typical case of symbiosis between a patron from the ruling elite and a high-ranking scholar who proved a loyal client. Appointing Ibn Abī Sharīf as chief judge and later as *shakyh* had several advantages for the ruler. Ibn Abī Sharīf was a successful and competent scholar who enjoyed the respect of the scholarly community and the broader population. Al-Ghawrī could be sure that his choice of Ibn Abī Sharīf as chief judge would find general support. Similarly, by giving the prestigious position of *shaykh* of his funeral complex to a scholar who had been honorably discharged from the highest office a Mamluk scholar could hope for, the ruler boosted the prestige of his endowed complex. Moreover, the presence of such a man in his *majālis* not only added to the scholarly level and reputation of the ruler's salons, but also helped to support al-Ghawrī's credentials as a learned and knowledgeable ruler. From Ibn Abī Sharīf's perspective, his cooperation with al-Ghawrī gained him two of the highest-ranking positions in the Mamluk scholarly world, and these positions must have helped him accumulate economic and social capital.

Both men were evidently well aware of their roles in this relationship of protective patronage. Al-Ghawrī made sure that Ibn Abī Sharīf received his financial dues, occasionally consulted him on legal matters, granted him access to his *majālis*, and otherwise left him to discharge his offices. Ibn Abī Sharīf, in turn, made his cultural capital available for the sultan's benefit and demonstrated his loyalty: He not only fulfilled his official functions impeccably and offered his legal advice, but also did his best to ensure that his patron appeared in a favorable light in his *majālis* by praising and defending the latter's contributions to the scholarly discussion. Moreover, at least twice, he wrote *fatwā*s taking up questions that arose in al-Ghawrī's salons, thereby indicating that the questions discussed there warranted the attention of full-fledged scholars.

Yet, the reciprocal character of his patronage relation with al-Ghawrī became most obvious when it failed. In Shawwāl 919/December 1513, a legal case threw the scholarly community of Cairo into turmoil: A Shāfiʿī deputy judge by the name of Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī had committed adultery (*zinā*) with the wife of a Ḥanafī colleague called Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl. Thanks to a neighbor, the cuckolded husband caught the two adulterers in flagrante delicto. Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl apprehended his wife and her lover, who tried to persuade him to let them go by offering him a huge sum of money. Khalīl, the Ḥanafī deputy judge, however, went to the chief chamberlain (*ḥājib al-ḥujjāb*), who had the two adulterers arrested. The chief chamberlain then called for another Shāfiʿī deputy judge who recorded Nūr al-Dīn's confession that he had committed adultery. Thereupon, the chief chamberlain stripped Nūr al-Dīn and had him and the unfaithful wife beaten, then paraded them through Cairo riding back-

wards on a donkey. He then demanded a fee of 100 *dīnār*s from the wife, but since she was penniless, her husband Khalīl was forced to pay the sum in her stead.[200]

This, however, was not the end of the affair, as Ibn Iyās explains: "Khalīl had a young son who used to perform recitations with the *muqarrabūn* in front of the sultan in Duhaysha Hall. When his father was forced to pay, he went to the sultan and told the latter what had happened from beginning to end."[201] The sultan had the chief judges summoned and blamed them for the behavior of their deputies. He then called for the Shāfiʿī deputy judge to whom Nūr al-Dīn had confessed his crime and ordered him to pronounce the punishment that the Prophet Muḥammad had stipulated for adultery, that is, stoning. With the consent of his chief judge, the Shāfiʿī deputy judge issued the verdict following the sultan's instructions. However, it was agreed that the execution should be postponed until the pilgrimage caravan had departed.[202]

According to Ibn Iyās, al-Ghawrī pressed for the stoning of the two adulterers because "he wanted to demonstrate [his] justice so that it would be written in the [books of] history that whoever committed adultery in his days was stoned, as had happened in the Prophet's time."[203] In the chronicler's interpretation, the case of the two adulterers gave the sultan an opportunity to present himself to his subjects as a just ruler who upheld prophetic injunctions—and all of this without any financial loss, as the case had nothing to do with the sultan's often criticized fiscal schemes.

However, al-Ghawrī's plan to postpone the stoning till after the pilgrims' departure backfired. Another Shāfiʿī deputy judge by the name of Shams al-Dīn al-Zankalūnī requested a *fatwā* in which he asked the scholars of Cairo whether a man who committed adultery, confessed his actions, and then withdrew his confession could be subjected to stoning as the prescribed *ḥadd* punishment. Here, Ibn Abī Sharīf entered the scene and ruled, together with other *ʿulamāʾ*, that under such circumstances, the *ḥadd* punishment must not be enforced.[204] In this ruling, Ibn Abī Sharīf apparently followed what he and his colleagues saw as the only correct legal solution.[205]

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200   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 340–2.
201   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 342.
202   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 343. According to Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 252; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103, the two adulterers were brought before the sultan, too.
203   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 343.
204   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 343–4.
205   For the juridical consensus regarding the suspension of *ḥadd* punishments in such situations, cf. Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 269, 311; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 25. See also Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 271–2,

Though not explicitly stated by Ibn Iyās, indeed, Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī apparently revoked his confession.[206] When al-Ghawrī—whom Ibn Iyās praised elsewhere for controlling his anger[207]—learned about this development and the jurists' ruling, he became furious and summoned the four chief judges and all the scholars involved, including Ibn Abī Sharīf, to the citadel. The sultan thereupon addressed Ibn Abī Sharīf and one of his colleagues as follows: "How can it be that a man who is married to a woman comes to his house, finds a stranger sleeping with his wife under [one] blanket, the [stranger] confesses that [they committed] adultery and you say that he can withdraw [his confession]?"[208] To this, Ibn Abī Sharīf replied: "This is the law of God (*sharʿ Allāh*)."[209] He produced the relevant ruling from the legal literature, but the sultan exclaimed: "Am I not the one in power (*amr*) here and do I not have general jurisdiction (*naẓar*) in this affair?"[210] Ibn Abī Sharīf answered: "Yes, but [you have this power only] in accordance with the law of God and when you kill the two, you have to pay blood money for them."[211] Thereupon, al-Ghawrī nearly smacked Ibn Abī Sharīf to the ground. When the scholars present unanimously backed Ibn Abī Sharīf's positions, the sultan took drastic measures: He dismissed Ibn Abī Sharīf as *shaykh* of his funeral complex and banished him to Jerusalem. Other scholars, including the four chief judges, were also dismissed in an unprecedented step, on the same day. Shams al-Dīn al-Zankalūnī, the deputy judge who had solicited Ibn Abī Sharīf's fateful *fatwā*, was so brutally beaten, together with his sons, that rumors said that he died soon thereafter.[212] The two adulterers were hanged at the door of Ibn Abī Sharīf's house.[213]

The events just summarized make for a good story of sex and crime, one that Ibn Iyās tells in vivid, rich detail over the course of almost ten pages of his chronicle. Moreover, its end tallies well with Ibn Iyās' general characterization of al-Ghawrī as an unjust ruler. Hence, we should be careful not to accept all of

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312–5, 351. With the withdrawal of the confession, the legal concept of *shubha* applied; as noted in section 3.1.5 above, this concept was apparently unknown to the sultan.

206　Ibn Iyās' account is not clear on when the confession was withdrawn, but Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* i, 252; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103, indicate that this took place when the sultan became involved in the affair.

207　Cf. the preceding section.

208　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 344.

209　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 344.

210　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 345.

211　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 345.

212　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 345–8. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 252; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103, confirm his death and state that one of his sons was beaten to death as well.

213　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 349.

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it at face value, especially with regard to the specific words exchanged between the parties involved. Yet, with respect to the impact of the affair on the relationship between Ibn Abī Sharīf and the sultan, there can be little doubt that Ibn Iyās' account is fairly accurate, given that it is confirmed, inter alia, by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī,[214] Ibn al-Ḥanbalī,[215] al-Ghazzī,[216] and Ibn al-ʿImād.[217]

A manuscript in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome preserves a further, unique account of the incident. MS Vat. Ar. 734 includes a one-page note entitled *Ṣūrat mā waqaʿa li-shaykh mashāyikh al-Islām Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf maʿa al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī* (Depiction of what happened to the chief *shaykh* of Islam Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf with Sultan al-Ghawrī).[218] It was written by the Shāfiʿī jurisprudent Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī (d. 1004/1596) based on information he had received from his father Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ramlī, who had been a pupil of Ibn Abī Sharīf and learned from the latter about the affair.[219] This text, which comes as close to a description of the events from Ibn Abī Sharīf's perspective as possible, confirms Ibn Iyās' account in all relevant points, but provides additional details about inter-scholarly competition in late Mamluk Cairo. According to the text, in his *fatwā* Ibn Abī Sharīf ruled that the adulterers were not to be stoned and that anyone who killed them would be subjected to retaliation. Those who envied the *shaykh*, who remain nameless, used this passage to defame him in the eyes of the sultan, saying that Ibn Abī Sharīf "had stated as his legal opinion that you [that is, the sultan] should be killed."[220] The text indicates that this was the element of the *fatwā* that prompted the sultan's harsh reaction.

In the context of the present chapter, the affair of the deputy judge and his unfaithful wife is most interesting for what it tells us about the relationship between Ibn Abī Sharīf and al-Ghawrī.[221] Why did the sultan react so harshly toward the jurist, dismissing him from his office, banishing him to the provin-

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214   Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 252.
215   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i, 66.
216   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103–4.
217   Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 119–20.
218   On the manuscript, see Della Vida, *Elenco* 70.
219   On Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī, see Spevack, *Scholar* 78.
220   Al-Ramlī, *Ṣūrat* fol. 3ʳ. For another account of the incident confirming the course of events and likewise favorable to Ibn Abī Sharīf, see Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā* 51.
221   Several authors studied Ibn Iyās' account, but none of them focused on the relationship between al-Ghawrī and Ibn Abī Sharīf. See, e.g., Katz, Penalty 359–66; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 216–7; Rapoport, Women 1–2, 47; Rapoport, Justice 99–100; Petry, *Underworld* 140–1, 297; Petry, *Protectors* 149–50, 156–8; Petry, Justice 207–11; Schimmel, Kalif 112–5; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 188–90; Ingalls, *Innovation* 102–4.

cial backwater of Jerusalem, and disgracing him by hanging the two adulterers on his doorstep? Apart from the two adulterers and al-Zankalūnī, who had asked for Ibn Abī Sharīf's *fatwā*, no one else received such a severe punishment, not even the four chief judges who were ultimately responsible for all the legal procedures.

The answer to this question lies in the dynamics of the patronage relation between the sultan and Ibn Abī Sharīf. As a loyal client, the scholar had always supported the sultan's opinions. Now, however, he openly opposed the sultan's interpretation of the law. As Ibn Iyās' account makes clear, Ibn Abī Sharīf had no doubt that the sultan could stone the two adulterers if he wanted to. Yet, the scholar openly stated that if the sultan did so, he would violate "God's law" and—according to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ramlī's account—it would be murder. This implied that if the sultan had the two adulterers stoned, he was either ignorant of the correct implementation of Islamic law or consciously decided to violate it, in both cases he would, at the least, be obligated to pay blood money, or become liable to capital punishment. Both of these implications would have had dramatic consequences for al-Ghawrī's image and legitimacy among the population. As argued throughout this study, the sultan did his best to present himself as a wise ruler knowledgeable in various fields of Islamic learning. Few events could be more damaging to this image than to have the most respected scholars of the realm, especially his long-time clients, oppose his interpretation of Islamic law in a case that was well known. Moreover, if the sultan knowingly decided to break the law, it would be an overt act of injustice; thus, it would show that his detractors were right in accusing him of tyranny—and all because of an affair in which he sought to present himself as a just ruler upholding the Prophet's example.[222]

Ibn Abī Sharīf's legal ruling thus hit the sultan in a particularly sensitive spot and must have seemed like an act of the utmost disloyalty from his long-time client. It is not surprising that the sultan's reaction not only included the withdrawal of all the benefits Ibn Abī Sharīf had enjoyed, but also aimed to diminish his position in the local scholarly community: exiled to Jerusalem, Ibn Abī Sharīf would be bereft of the chance to interact with the scholarly luminaries of the Mamluk realm, who usually lived in Cairo and Damascus. Yet, Ibn Abī Sharīf's status as a distinguished scholar and a long-time client of the sultan also mitigated his fall from grace to some degree, as he, unlike al-Zankalūnī, only lost his position, not his life.

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222   For a somewhat similar interpretation, see Petry, *Protectors* 156–7.

As a side note, two aspects of the sultan's behavior in this affair deserve attention: First, the ruler was obviously aware of the prescribed punishment for adultery in Islamic law. This again demonstrates his familiarity with key concepts of Islamic law, although al-Ghawrī's reaction to the jurists' objections was, as Ibn Iyās presents it, more that of an ardent amateur than a scholar. Yet, ultimately, the scholars' opposition was not in vain, since al-Ghawrī did not enforce the *ḥadd* punishment of stoning and instead had the adulterers hanged. While the difference between these punishments might appear negligible, to al-Ghawrī's contemporaries, they were two fundamentally different things: Stoning was the penalty prescribed by God that could only be applied in accordance with the Islamic legal tradition. Hanging lacked the religious significance of stoning and counted among the so-called *taʿzīr* punishments that rulers could inflict at their own discretion.[223]

The severance of the patronage relation between al-Ghawrī and Ibn Abī Sharīf was irreversible, although in the end, the scholar was not forced to relocate to Jerusalem. He stayed in Cairo under a kind of house arrest and taught privately until his death in 923/1517.[224]

Like Ibn Abī Sharīf, his younger Ḥanafī colleague Sarī l-Dīn ʿAbd al-Barr b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna came from a family of scholars and was of Syrian origin.[225] Born in Aleppo in 851/1447–8, at an early age he moved to Cairo where he studied with numerous teachers, including his father Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna and his grandfather Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna, both of whom served as chief judges.[226]

Supported by his father, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna likewise embarked on a juridical career. Ibn Iyās mentions ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna for the first time in Muḥarram 875/July 1470 when he supported his father who staunchly opposed the Sufi poet ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235).[227] The question of whether the latter's religious poetry was acceptable was the subject of a heated among late Mamluk scholars. Unfortunately for ʿAbd al-Barr, he and his father found them-

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223 Cf. Lange, *Justice* 62–7.

224 Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i, 66–7; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 103–4; al-Ramlī, *Ṣūrat* fol. 3ʳ. On his death, see also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 105; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 61.

225 On the Ibn al-Shiḥna family, see Schimmel, Kalif 93–122.

226 Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220. Al-Ghazzī's account of Ibn al-Shiḥna's life also appears, almost verbatim, in Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 98–100. See also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i.2, 744; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* iv, 33–5. Petry, *Twilight* 145.

227 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 44. On this debate, see, e.g., Homerin, *Poet* 1, 30–1, 33, 54–75; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 439–43; Saleh, Al-Suyūṭī 74; as well as section 5.1.2 below; and on the role of the Ibn al-Shiḥna family, see Homerin, *Poet* 62, 65–6, 68, 73–4.

selves on the losing side when Sultan Qāytbāy decided in favor of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's defenders. Consequently, ʿAbd al-Barr's father lost his position as Ḥanafī chief judge[228] and ʿAbd al-Barr felt Qāytbāy's disfavor in 879/1474 when a rival scholar cast doubt on ʿAbd al-Barr's educational credentials and accused him of having sent slaves to beat him up. Qāytbāy thereupon had ʿAbd al-Barr apprehended for interrogation. Although ultimately, the entire affair ended well for ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, as it became known that his opponent was lying,[229] this incident must have demonstrated to the young scholar the value of maintaining good relations with those in power.[230]

During Qāytbāy's tenure, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's career made only very limited headway. When his father died in 890/1485, Ibn al-Shiḥna took over the latter's position as *shaykh* of the Shaykhūniyya Sufi *khānqāh*,[231] but did not manage to attain any other post of note in Cairo during the early years of his career. Even when Qāytbāy's reign ended, Ibn al-Shiḥna's situation did not improve noticeably or right away. In 903/1497, he lost a newly acquired position as *shaykh* of another religious institution within a couple of days because of the intervention of Qāytbāy's son and successor Muḥammad,[232] and one year later, Muḥammad's successor al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Qāniṣawh placed Ibn al-Shiḥna under house arrest when he feared that the latter was supporting one of his rivals.[233]

In 906/1501, it seemed that Ibn al-Shiḥna's hour had finally come: Sultan Ṭūmānbāy al-Ashrafī, known for supporting men who had suffered under his predecessors, appointed him Ḥanafī chief judge.[234] Yet, Ibn al-Shiḥna's luck did not last: Only a couple of days later, Ṭūmānbāy replaced him with a rival who had been Ibn al-Shiḥna's predecessor in office, an event which caused general ridicule at Ibn al-Shiḥna's expense.[235] It is not entirely clear why Ibn al-Shiḥna's professional life developed the way it did, given that he began with the perfect

228   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 47.

229   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 97.

230   On Ibn al-Shiḥna's relation with Qāytbāy, see also Petry, *Twilight* 145; Petry, *Protectors* 147–8; and on his life in this period, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* iv, 34.

231   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 209. On this institution, see, e.g., Sartain, *Biography* 21, 25, 121, 155–6.

232   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 367. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 27, 62; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* iv, 33–4.

233   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 401–2; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 74. On Ibn al-Shiḥna's career in this period, see also al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* iv, 34–5; Petry, *Twilight* 146; Petry, *Protectors* 22, 147; Schimmel, Kalif 103–4.

234   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 457.

235   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 461. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 116; Schimmel, Kalif 104.

background for a career in the judiciary; yet clearly, his inability to find favor with rulers had a tremendously negative impact on his professional success.

Yet, Ibn al-Shiḥna next opportunity soon arrived: Only days after his ascension to the throne, al-Ghawrī promoted the scholar, again, to the chief judgeship of his *madhhab*.[236] Ibn al-Shiḥna, who had learned the hard way how important a ruler's patronage was, did his best to administer his office to al-Ghawrī's satisfaction: When the new sultan planned to expropriate religious endowments during the first weeks of his reign, Ibn al-Shiḥna was the only jurist who officially consented to these plans.[237] Similarly, Ibn al-Shiḥna later ruled that the Friday prayer could be held in the sultan's funeral complex; thus, it was raised to the status of a congregational mosque (*jāmiʿ*)—a decision for which the sultan recompensed him with a robe of honor.[238] Over time, the relationship between Ibn al-Shiḥna and al-Ghawrī became so close that the sultan appointed the scholar as his personal Friday preacher.[239]

In addition, Ibn al-Shiḥna participated regularly in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* indicate. In the first work, Ibn al-Shiḥna is a prominent, but by no means outstanding member of the sultan's salon. In the half dozen instances in which he appears in the text,[240] he is usually referred to as the Ḥanafī chief judge and shown to be knowledgeable in *fiqh* and poetry, as is to be expected from a man of his background.[241] Even though *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* pays no particular attention to Ibn al-Shiḥna, the text indicates that the judge enjoyed a special relationship with the sultan, since he is the only participant who is given the epithet "*muqarrab* of His Excellency, al-Malik al-Ashraf" and is further praised as "the most learned in *fiqh* of the moderns and the pride of those in command."[242]

Al-Kawkab al-durrī focuses much more on Ibn al-Shiḥna's role in the *majālis* and, after the sultan and the first-person narrator, it presents him as the third most important participant.[243] As discussed above, this way of portraying the Ḥanafī chief judge can most probably be explained by the hope of the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to become Ibn al-Shiḥna's client or to rely on the latter

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236   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 7.

237   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 14–5. See also section 2.1.2.1 above.

238   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 58.

239   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 84–5, 128. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 324–5; and on the early relationship between the chief judge and the ruler in general, see Petry, *Twilight* 146–7; Petry, *Protectors* 148; Schimmel, Kalif 104–8.

240   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 63, 154, 167, 169, 229, 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 57–8, 63–4, 110.

241   On Ibn al-Shiḥna as a poet, see, e.g., al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220–2.

242   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 63 (both quotations).

243   Cf. section 3.1.2.3 above.

as a patronage broker who might help him to strengthen his relation with the sultan.[244] As shown above, the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* indeed managed to bring his work to the attention of Ibn al-Shiḥna, who added a note of recommendation to it.[245]

On a rhetorical level, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* highlights Ibn al-Shiḥna's special role in the *majālis* by consistently referring to him as *shaykh al-Islām*. Unlike its Ottoman equivalent,[246] this Mamluk term did not designate a specific office, rather, it constituted an honorific bestowed upon the greatest legal scholars.[247] Ibn Iyās confirms that Ibn al-Shiḥna was one of several people in late Mamluk Cairo to be granted this title.[248]

Ibn al-Shiḥna's participation in the *majālis* must have contributed to the scholarly reputation of these events. Moreover, the chief judge regularly replied to the sultan's legal questions, which were, at times, of direct personal relevance to the ruler who was, like Ibn al-Shiḥna, a member of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.[249] Note, for example, the following discussion:

> **Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "If a person who is performing the ritual prayer wears a Sallārī tunic and the [person's] hand does not stick out from the sleeve, then is the prayer valid or not?"
>
> **Answer:** "It is reprehensible (*makrūh*) according to the Ḥanafī authorities, while the Shāfiʿī authorities allow it without declaring it reprehensible."
>
> **Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "Is it then preferable to wear the Sallārī during ritual prayer or not?"
>
> **Answer:** The *shaykh al-Islām* said: "It is obviously preferable to wear it, as it points to the perfection of the ruler's manners (*adab*)."[250]

This discussion was of personal concern to the sultan, given that Sallārī tunics were the standard dress of members of the Mamluk military elite during the Circassian period.[251] For al-Ghawrī and other Mamluk military interested in

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244   Cf. section 3.1.2.3 above.

245   Cf. section 3.1.2.1 above.

246   On the Ottoman office of *shaykh al-Islām*, see, e.g., Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 157–8; Burak, *Formation* 38–48; Bulliet, Evolution, esp. 53–6, 66–7; Repp, *Müfti*; Atçil, *Scholars* 38.

247   Popper, *Notes* i, 100. See also Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 55; Bulliet, Evolution 55.

248   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 112.

249   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 11–2, 232, 279–80; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–2, 90.

250   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 230–1.

251   Mayer, *Costume* 23–5, 30, 55; Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 121; Baker, Dress 180. See also Petry, Robing 362.

performing their ritual prayers correctly—or at least in appearing to—it was important to know whether they could fulfill their religious obligations in this kind of clothing. When the sultan received the answer that according to his school of law, wearing a Sallarī tunic during prayer was reprehensible if it covered the hands, he seems to have pondered whether he should not wear this kind of clothing at prayer times. Here, however, Ibn al-Shiḥna stepped in and, in his capacity as chief judge of the sultan's *madhhab*, recommended that he should keep his tunic on during the prayer, as this would reflect positively on his manners. Here Ibn al-Shiḥna appears as an important adviser who used his learning to assist the sultan, especially when legal norms seemed to conflict with Mamluk practices of sultanic representation.

Yet, Ibn al-Shiḥna's role was not limited to that of a mere counsellor of the sultan. During the *majālis*, Ibn al-Shiḥna repeatedly confirmed the correctness of replies given by al-Ghawrī, at times referring to texts that corroborated the sultan's point of view.[252] Thus, his function in the sultan's salons was at least threefold: As a high-ranking scholar, his mere presence added to the aura of learning in these events. In his capacity the sultan's client, Ibn al-Shiḥna provided the latter with his legal expertise whenever the need arose. And as chief judge of the sultan's *madhhab*, Ibn al-Shiḥna confirmed al-Ghawrī's scholarly skills by agreeing with and supporting his points of view.

Ibn al-Shiḥna's value for al-Ghawrī went beyond his participation in the sultan's salons. As Carl Petry showed through a meticulous study of documents relating to al-Ghawrī's *waqf*s, Ibn al-Shiḥna was instrumental in the sultan's schemes to establish a "private fisc"[253] under his control, through confiscations and the manipulation of religious endowments.[254] Petry described ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna as the "prime architect of his master's devices"[255] given that the scholar "acted either as presiding judge or first witness in more than a hundred of these documents [related to al-Ghawrī's financial schemes]."[256] From Petry's studies, Ibn al-Shiḥna not only appears as the most important legal adviser and assistant of the sultan with regard to the latter's financial maneuvers, but also as directly involved in the pertinent transactions in question. Apparently, he used his knowledge of the law and his position as chief judge to give them the veneer of legality.

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252 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 7, 232–3, 235, 269–70; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5–6, 75, 84–5.
253 Petry, *Protectors* 198.
254 See section 2.2.1 above for a general discussion and contextualization of Petry's findings.
255 Petry, *Protectors* 207.
256 Petry, *Protectors* 206. On the chief judge's role with regard to al-Ghawrī's handling of *waqf*s, see also Ibrāhīm, al-Tawthīqāt 302–3; Petry, Innovations 463–4; Petry, *Protectors* 201.

Unlike Ibn Abī Sharīf, whom contemporaries regarded as an exemplary scholar, Ibn al-Shiḥna's reputation suffered severely from the services he rendered to the sultan. In 913/1507, a poet by the name of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Salamūnī composed a mordacious lampoon of the chief judge after Ibn al-Shiḥna had punished him harshly for an earlier poem in which he had mocked a member of the sultan's civil administration. The lampoon spread quickly among the people; thereupon, Ibn al-Shiḥna complained to the sultan about al-Salamūnī. The sultan had the poet apprehended, but instead of punishing him, handed him over to the judiciary. The judges of Cairo sided with Ibn al-Shiḥna and decided that al-Salamūnī should be whipped and ignominiously paraded through Cairo.[257] Yet the common people, who were fond of the poet, took measures to prevent the parade and even prepared themselves to stone Ibn al-Shiḥna.[258] Apparently, they endorsed al-Salamūnī's censure of the chief judge, who was blamed in the poem, inter alia, of taking bribes, applying double standards in dispensing justice, practicing unbelief by declaring forbidden things allowed, embezzling the funds of inalienable endowments, and selling their property.[259] Al-Salamūnī went so far as to state: "If he [that is, Ibn al-Shiḥna] could, he would sell the Kaʿba."[260] Apparently, Ibn al-Shiḥna's financial ruses and especially his manipulations of *waqf*s were known, at least in part, to the population at large. Other sources likewise suggest that Ibn al-Shiḥna was quite an unpopular man, although his writings were well received in the scholarly community.[261]

Despite the general uproar caused by Ibn al-Shiḥna's actions, he was still extremely valuable to al-Ghawrī and the relationship between the two seems to have remained largely unaffected by the al-Salamūnī affair, given that even after it, al-Ghawrī awarded Ibn al-Shiḥna at least one additional position as *shaykh* of the Ṣarghitmishiyya Madrasa.[262] Moreover, at times, Ibn al-Shiḥna

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257   On being ignominiously paraded (*tashhīr*) as a form of punishment, see Katz, Penalty 366; Lange, *Paradise* 275–6; Lange, *Justice* 9–10, 18, 20–1, 38–9, 56, 60, 79–89, 168–75, 222–43, 248; Frenkel, Projection 49.

258   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 113. For a similar incident in which the people also wanted to stone Ibn al-Shiḥna, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 300.

259   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 113–4. On the al-Salamūnī incident, see also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 301; Petry, *Twilight* 147–8; Schimmel, Kalif 106–7.

260   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 113.

261   Cf. al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220–2; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 744–7; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 470; for evaluations of his scholarly skills and writings, on which see also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 99–100; Suppl. ii, 94.

262   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 135.

was the only civilian official to accompany the sultan during this period, when the latter left Cairo or held parades.[263]

The close relationship between al-Ghawrī and Ibn al-Shiḥna is also noted in al-Ghazzī's biographical work, which calls him the sultan's *jalīs* (table companion) and *samīr* (companion in nightly entertainment).[264] Ibn al-Ḥanbalī uses the same two terms[265] and refers to Ibn al-Shiḥna as the most prominent of the intimates (sg. *anīs*) with whom the sultan socialized during his nightly conversations (sg. *musāmara*).[266] Ibn Iyās describes their relationship as follows:

> He [could] make decisions during al-Ashraf Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī's reign that no other judge [could] make [...]. He came to act independently in the affairs of the sultanate [even] if the sultan was present.[267]

Elsewhere, Ibn Iyās writes:

> [Ibn al-Shiḥna] was among the [sultan's] most distinguished intimates (*akhiṣṣāʾ*), he used to spend the night with him three nights a week, was among his boon companions (*nudamāʾ*), and traveled with him if he made a journey. [Ibn al-Shiḥna] acquired supreme authority (*al-ḥall wa-l-ʿaqd*) in all matters of the sultanate. [...] He was in the position of Jaʿfar al-Barmakī with Hārūn al-Rashīd.[268]

Ibn Iyās' note on the "three nights a week" that Ibn al-Shiḥna spent with the sultan apparently refers to the chief judge's participation in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, which usually took place every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening. Moreover, the note demonstrates that Ibn al-Shiḥna's regular participation in the salons was an important aspect of his extraordinary relationship with the sultan.

The second element of note is Ibn Iyās' reference to Jaʿfar al-Barmakī (d. 187/803), a member of the Barmakī family who, like his father and his brother, served the ʿAbbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809) as vizier and

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263 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 290–4, 340. See also Schimmel, Kalif 108–11.

264 Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220.

265 Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 744.

266 Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 48.

267 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 470.

268 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 345.

governor. Yet, unlike his relatives, Jaʿfar's intimate relationship with Hārūn al-Rashīd went beyond the professional, until his sudden fall from grace. Dominique Sourdel notes: "But above all he was the Caliph's favourite, if not his Ganymede as has often been supposed, and willingly took part in his pleasure parties, of which his brother, on the other hand, disapproved."[269] Ibn Iyās' readers surely understood this historical reference, given that stories about the Barmakids, the closeness between Hārūn al-Rashīd and Jaʿfar, and their fall were widely known in the middle period.[270]

Sourdel's reference to Jaʿfar al-Barmakī as Hārūn al-Rashīd's "favourite" raises the question of whether this term also applied to Ibn al-Shiḥna. In the first chapter, we defined favorites as members of court societies who enjoy the particular favor of rulers and have prerogatives not based on clearly defined offices. Furthermore, because of their continuous direct access to rulers, favorites often function as patronage brokers and frequently engage in clandestine operations. Moreover, rulers often selected their favorites from among those who had been outsiders and therefore depended on their patrons to maintain their status. Finally, when a favorite falls from grace, it is often a particularly dramatic descent.[271]

Many of these characteristics apply to Ibn al-Shiḥna. He was a particularly valued member of the innermost circle of al-Ghawrī's court society, and his authority went beyond that typically accorded to Ḥanafī chief judges. The fact that Ibn al-Shiḥna was sought out as a patronage broker is suggested by the case of the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* discussed above.

Moreover, Ibn al-Shiḥna had near-constant access to the sultan. He not only met al-Ghawrī in his official capacity as chief judge, but he also attended the sultan's *majālis* on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, served as the sultan's preacher on Fridays, and accompanied him when he traveled. Apparently, there were periods in their relationship when the two men saw each other almost every day.

Just as one would expect from a favorite, Ibn al-Shiḥna owed his exalted position almost entirely to the sultan's favor, given that his career had made little headway under al-Ghawrī's predecessors. Moreover, in light of Ibn al-Shiḥna's unpopularity, the sultan's benevolence was mainly what kept him in office. Another element typical of favorites is their connection to the clandes-

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269   Sourdel, al-Barāmika 1034.
270   Sourdel, al-Barāmika 1035. On these stories, see Sadan, Death; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting* 33–56. Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 103ᵛ–105ʳ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 83–4, narrate some of them.
271   Cf. section 1.2.4 above.

tine activities of rulers, and we know that al-Ghawrī relied on Ibn al-Shiḥna for the covert manipulation of *waqf*s. Finally, Ibn al-Shiḥna's fall from the sultan's grace was as sharp and sudden as one would expect from a court favorite, as we see shortly.

Thus, according to the definition outlined above, it is appropriate to call Ibn al-Shiḥna al-Ghawrī's favorite. This helps us to conceptualize the structure of al-Ghawrī's court society and to gain deeper insights into its internal dynamics. Moreover, it demonstrates that the results of research on courts in non-Islamicate societies are applicable to the late Mamluk court along the lines delineated above.

Ibn al-Shiḥna fell, just as Ibn Abī Sharīf, over the affair of the adulterous deputy judge discussed above and was ousted from his office, together with the three other chief judges. Yet, in Ibn al-Shiḥna's case, the situation was special: It was one of Ibn al-Shiḥna's deputy judges who had committed adultery with another man's wife, and according to Ibn Iyās, the sultan used this opportunity to voice his dissatisfaction with Ibn al-Shiḥna's subordinates, who were known for drinking wine, committing adultery, and selling inalienable endowments.[272] Furthermore, Ibn Iyās states that Ibn al-Shiḥna first gave his legal consent to the stoning of the two adulterers, but then retracted his ruling when Ibn Abī Sharīf and other scholars argued that the withdrawal of the confession had to be taken into account.[273] Apparently, in this case, Ibn al-Shiḥna was not willing to support the sultan with an interpretation of the law that suited the latter's needs but went against the legal consensus. Given Ibn al-Shiḥna's earlier track record of bending and breaking laws in the sultan's service, it seems improbable that, in this case, he felt a compelling urge to adhere to what he understood as God's will. Rather, it is more plausible that Ibn al-Shiḥna simply underestimated the sultan's interest in a case that was unrelated to al-Ghawrī's financial schemes, which were usually the field where the ruler counted on the chief judge's manipulative skills.

After Ibn al-Shiḥna's fall, the sultan never again turned his face to him; indeed, he treated him as if he had never met him.[274] After all the former chief judge's attempts to find someone to intercede for him with the sultan failed,[275]

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272   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 343. The last of the sultan's accusations is not without a certain irony given Ibn al-Shiḥna's role in the ruler's own financial transactions.

273   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 346. On this passage, see also ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 217.

274   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 345.

275   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 346. Petry, *Protectors* 207–8, found evidence that the former chief judge was still involved, even after his dismissal, in legal affairs pertaining to al-Ghawrī's handling of *waqf*s.

he spent his last years in obscurity until his death in 921/1515. His contemporaries seem to have cared little about his end, given that our sources include contradictory information about his date and place of death.[276]

The relationship between Ibn al-Shiḥna, who must have understood early in life how important sultanic patronage was, and al-Ghawrī is an extreme example of the symbiosis between the mighty and the learned in late Mamluk society. Between the two men, there existed more than a relationship of simple exchange, although it is clear that al-Ghawrī used Ibn al-Shiḥna's cultural capital to his best advantage, both in the learned debates of his *majālis* and in the manipulation of funds, and compensated the scholar with both material benefits and respected positions. Yet, the connection between the two men obviously had a more personal component as well, one that is best understood through the concept of the court favorite.

Taken together, the cases of Ibn Abī Sharīf and Ibn al-Shiḥna illustrate both the opportunities and the risks entailed by the close personal association between high-profile scholars and Mamluk rulers. Both Ibn Abī Sharīf and Ibn al-Shiḥna, though to different degrees, owed their high-ranking positions to the close contacts they maintained with al-Ghawrī as their patron; among these contacts, their participation in the ruler's regular *majālis* figured prominently. For both men, these contacts resulted in the acquisition of significant social and economic capital. However, their fate also shows that high-ranking scholars had a particular risk of losing some or all of these benefits, if the sultan perceived their behavior as falling short of the loyalty he expected from his most distinguished clients. Hence, the cases of Ibn Abī Sharīf and Ibn al-Shiḥna are particularly clear examples of the advantages and dangers that close proximity to the ruler entailed for members of his court society.

When reviewing the role that high-ranking government officials, as the second group of local learned attendees, played in the sultan's *majālis*, it is clear that such people did not figure prominently in the salons. A case in point here is Maḥmūd b. Ajā (d. 925/1519), who as private secretary (*kātib al-sirr*) was technically the highest-ranking civilian official under al-Ghawrī.[277] While his

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276   Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 100: Shaʿbān 921/September–October 1515, Aleppo; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 747: 921 without a month, Cairo; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 222 and Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 386: Shaʿbān 921/September–October 1515, no place. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 274: Shaʿbān 921/September–October 1515, Cairo; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 470: Rajab 921/early September 1515, no place.

277   On him, see Martel-Thoumian, *Civils* 43, 46, 61, 158, 339, 354, 375, 417, 419, 454; Björkman, *Beiträge* 71; Petry, *Protectors* 42; Petry, *Twilight* 179.

presence on the occasion of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday,[278] and three regular sessions of al-Ghawrī's salons is duly acknowledged in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,[279] there is not a single reference to Ibn Ajā contributing to the scholarly disputations of the *majālis*. This observation also applies to other members of the Mamluk administration present in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: Our sources do not clearly attribute a single statement from a regular *majālis* session to one of these men.

People such as Ibn Ajā who, although learned,[280] qua their profession stood somewhat outside the scholarly system of the late Mamluk period and were apparently seen as having little to add to the *majālis* discussions. This reaffirms the specific character of these events: They were not primarily political consultations in the narrow sense of the word, in which administrators such as Ibn Ajā would have had an important role to play, rather they were scholarly meetings that, although not devoid of political significance, were more the domain of learned judges, *muftī*s, and *shaykh*s.[281]

In comparison to Ibn Ajā and his fellow administrators, our *majālis* sources are more interested in the contributions of relatively minor *ʿulamāʾ* who, although not as famous as Ibn Abī Sharīf or ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, were nevertheless members of the scholarly community. Those belonging to this third subcategory include, for example, the prayer leaders during the *majālis*. With regard to one of them, a certain *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Razzāq, we find almost no information in the historiographical literature apart from the fact that he acted as one of the sultan's regular prayer leaders and died in 922/1516.[282] In the *majālis* accounts, this man not only appears fourteen times as *imām*,[283] but is also credited with a reply to a question by the sultan regarding a protective

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278   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 127; (ed. ʿAzzām) 47.

279   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 169, 205, 243–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 64, 90, 123. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 175.

280   Ibn Ajā must have been knowledgeable in Islamic law, as he was the Ḥanafī chief judge of Aleppo before his appointment as *kātib al-sirr*, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 307. On his scholarly credentials, see also, e.g., Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* ii, 798–9; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 304. Al-Ghazzī credits Ibn Ajā with a work on *ḥadīth* studies.

281   It is not clear whether our sources, in their attempt to present the sultanic *majālis* as scholarly events, downplayed the importance of the contributions of high-ranking government officials, or whether these people indeed played only a limited role in the learned discussions. The fact that works from both of the two independent traditions of writing about the *majālis* present them as relatively marginal participants speaks in favor of the second interpretation.

282   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 15.

283   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 35, 48, 97, 141, 147, 152, 162, 177, 188, 209, 216, 232, 256, 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 22, 27, 53, 56, 76, 95–6, 131, 138.

prayer against the plague[284] and with posing a question about a *kalām* topic.[285] Another minor religious scholar who served as prayer leader during the salons, one *shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn al-Barqūqī (date of death unknown), could not be located in any source not directly related to the *majālis*. Yet, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, he appears seven times as the prayer leader of a *majlis*[286] and is also directly involved in a heated dispute in which he is an adversary of the first-person narrator of the work.[287] Thus, unlike administrative officials, minor scholars and religious functionaries such as ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Kamāl al-Dīn al-Barqūqī are presented in our texts as full-fledged participants in the *majālis*, although the scope of their contributions is much more limited than those of leading scholars such as Ibn Abī Sharīf and ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna.

For other minor scholars, their participation in the *majālis* and the regular access to the ruler it entailed served as important stepping stones for the establishment of patronage relations that would give them an advantage in competitions for paid positions. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Naqīb al-Samadīsī is a case in point. Like ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Kamāl al-Dīn al-Barqūqī, this man appears in our sources on the *majālis* primarily as one of the sultan's favorite prayer leaders.[288] Moreover, the Ḥanafī scholar was once involved in a debate about the exegesis of Q 14:225, in which he brought forth an interpretation that another participant criticized as being too narrow and based on "the terminology of the jurisprudents" (*iṣṭilāḥ al-fuqahāʾ*) and not on that of the exegetes (*ahl al-tafsīr*).[289]

The information Ibn Iyās and al-Sakhāwī provide on al-Samadīsī confirms the picture that emerges in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. The former does not refer to al-Samadīsī at all until late 919/early 1514. While al-Sakhāwī includes a medium-length biography about his former student al-Samadīsī in his work, he is not very positive with regard to his scholarly merits, apart from his skill in Quran recitation, which must have been an asset for a career as a prayer leader. Yet, al-Sakhāwī comments at length on al-Samadīsī's contacts with members of the military elite, whom he served in various minor religious capacities.[290]

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284   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 43; (ed. ʿAzzām) 19.

285   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 98; (ed. ʿAzzām) 27. On the *kalām* discussion, see section 5.1.4.2 below.

286   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 21, 44, 181, 192, 213, 220, 247; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18, 72, 79, 100.

287   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 106.

288   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6, 10, 137, 156, 166, 171, 183, 195, 201, 218–9, 225, 240; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5, 9, 59, 63, 66, 81, 86, 107, 118.

289   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 241–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 119–20.

290   Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* vi, 246–7. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 98; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 191.

When Ibn Iyās first mentions al-Samadīsī, he states that the latter was qual-ified to serve as a Ḥanafī judge, but functioned as the *imām* of al-Ghawrī's *madrasa*.[291] This underlines both al-Samadīsī's personal attachment to the sul-tan and the fact that the rather modest position of *imām* was the highest office he had attained. According to the endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's *waqf*, al-Samadīsī received, as an employee of the sultan's *madrasa*, a monthly income of 1,200 *dirham*s—a very modest sum compared to the 6,000 *dirham*s a senior scholar such as Ibn Abī Sharīf was entitled to as *shaykh* of the same institu-tion. Moreover, Ibn Abī Sharīf only had to be present in the funeral complex during the morning shift, whereas al-Samadīsī led all five ritual prayers and additional ones on special occasions—evidently a full-time job. Nevertheless, the endowment deed indicates that al-Samadīsī must have possessed consid-erable scholarly skills, as he had to be well versed in the religious sciences in general, the recitation of the Quran, and religious law as it pertained to acts of worship in particular in order to be eligible for his position.[292]

Thus, up to the year 919/1514, al-Samadīsī appears in our sources as a rather inconspicuous minor scholar personally connected to the sultan, whom he served as a prayer leader during his *majālis* and as a lesser-known staff member of his funeral complex. All of this changed suddenly in the wake of the affair of the adulterous judge, that is, the same incident that brought about the downfall of Ibn Abī Sharīf and Ibn al-Shiḥna: A few days after Ibn al-Shiḥna's dismissal as Ḥanafī chief judge, al-Ghawrī appointed al-Samadīsī as his successor together with the other three new chief judges—according to Ibn Iyās an event that "was counted among the strange and rare phenomena."[293]

How can we explain that al-Ghawrī awarded, almost overnight, the highest position of his own *madhhab* to an insignificant scholarly figure who, as far as we know, had never even served as deputy judge? Since Ibn Iyās explicitly notes that money played no role in the appointment, the only factor that might explain al-Samadīsī's meteoric rise is his personal attachment to the sultan. As the latter's long-time *imām*, member of his intimates (*akhiṣṣāʾ*),[294] salon participant, and employee of his funeral complex, al-Samadīsī's patronage rela-tionship with the sultan secured his edge over other candidates for the chief judgeship. From al-Ghawrī's perspective, the decision to promote al-Samadīsī must have seemed preferable for at least three reasons: First, unlike much of

291   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 350.
292   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 104, 108.
293   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 351. Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 350–1 for the appointment. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 252.
294   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 477.

the scholarly establishment, al-Samadīsī apparently did not oppose the sultan's cause of action in the adultery affair—probably because he was not involved in it at all. Therefore, he was one of the few possible candidates who had not recently incurred the ruler's wrath. Second, al-Samadīsī's rather modest scholarly fame made it improbable that he would oppose the sultan's wishes, given that he depended completely on the ruler's favor. Third, over the years, al-Samadīsī established a track record of faithful, if unremarkable service to the sultan. In light of recent developments, it must have appeared recommendable to the sultan to award the office of chief judge to a loyal and unpretentious subordinate.

Al-Samadīsī discharged his duties in a way that aroused little attention and he seldom appears in Ibn Iyās's chronicle during his tenure.[295] When the sultan dismissed al-Samadīsī from office in Ramaḍān 921/November 1515, it was not a consequence of his behavior. Rather, Maḥmūd Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 926/1520), ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's son, had tendered the ruler 3,000 *dīnār*s for his father's former office—an offer that al-Ghawrī, who was known for selling offices to the highest bidder, obviously could not decline, despite the fact that Maḥmūd Ibn al-Shiḥna was, in Ibn Iyās' view, plainly unqualified for his new duties.[296] Although more competent, al-Samadīsī seems to have lacked the financial resources to outbid his competitor. The sultan, however, retained him as personal *imām*, in which capacity al-Samadīsī accompanied the ruler on his fateful trip to Syria.[297] Unlike his patron, he survived the campaign, but was deported to Istanbul where he remained until 927/1521.[298] Once he returned to Egypt, al-Samadīsī served as a judge of the pilgrimage caravan in 928/1522.[299] He passed away in 932/1525–6.[300]

Al-Samadīsī's case is a good example of how religious scholars could benefit from a close connection to a ruler. Apparently lacking a famous pedigree, al-Samadīsī's studies allowed him to obtain a position as the sultan's prayer leader. Through this position, al-Samadīsī was able to acquire valuable social capital and establish a patronage relation with al-Ghawrī, a decisive factor in the ruler's decision to appoint him chief judge.

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295   References to al-Samadīsī mainly come from lists of officials, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 357, 407, 418, 434; v, 92. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 255, 268.

296   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 477.

297   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 43, 77.

298   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 395.

299   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 477.

300   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 98.

Taken together, the examples of Ibn Abī Sharīf, Ibn al-Shiḥna, Ibn Ajā, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Barqūqī, and al-Samadīsī illustrate the full range of local scholarly figures participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. These figures included some of the most famous scholars of their day, as well as men whose death dates are not even known, high-ranking chief judges and administrators, as well as little-known *imām*s, faithful low-profile clients, and fallen favorites. As different as their individual biographies were, they were all examples of the symbiosis between scholars and members of the military elite during the late Mamluk period. Moreover, their status and competence as scholars contributed most significantly to the overall character of the sultan's *majālis*.

4.1.2.3 The Guests: Itinerant Scholars, Envoys, and Foreign Political Dignitaries

During the late middle period, Cairo constituted one of the most prominent political, cultural, scholarly, and economic centers of the Islamicate world. Having escaped the destruction that devastated other Islamicate cities in the wake of the crusades and the Mongol invasions, the Egyptian capital developed into what Muhsin al-Musawi called "a medieval-premodern epicenter where travelers, scholars, exiles, poets, and others settled, argued, and met fellow scholars."[301] Al-Ghawrī's court was open to guests and newcomers from across the Islamicate world in general and its Turkic- and Persian-speaking parts in particular. A significant number of foreigners from these regions moved to Cairo because of political upheavals in their home regions.[302] At least some of them also participated in the sultan's salons, thereby underlining its transregional importance and contributing to what Ulrich Haarmann called "the cosmopolitan atmosphere in Mamlūk quarters that contrasts favourably with the parochial and self-sufficient narrowness of the local Egyptian academe."[303] Moreover, the participation of these men helped the sultan establish and maintain channels of communication with other regions of the Islamicate world in general and their courts in particular.

The prime example of an itinerant scholar who came from the east to al-Ghawrī's court and stayed with the sultan as a guest was al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. While this man's case is discussed above and need not detain us here,[304] it shows how much the presence of a scholar from the Persianate world could influence

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301   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 5. See also al-Musawi, *Republic* 6, 11, 71.
302   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
303   Haarmann, *Miṣr* 175. See also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 108.
304   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.

both the *majālis* themselves and their literary representations. Moreover, by telling the *majālis* participants about his experiences at other Islamicate courts, al-Sharīf contributed to an interregional exchange of information about Islamicate court culture.[305]

It seems that al-Sharīf was not the only scholar who came from the east in the wake of the political transformations caused by the rise of the Safawids, although no other itinerant Persianate scholar figures as prominently in our sources as the author of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Nevertheless, there is a passing reference to one other individual who apparently shared al-Sharīf's background, namely one Khawāja Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār who attended one of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in Shawwāl 910/March 1505.[306] The text does not provide any additional information on his role in the *majlis*, but in a Mamluk context, his unusual *laqab* and his Persian name, Dehdār,[307] which is written in the manuscript in a distinctly Persian form with the letter *hā'* unconnected to the second *dāl*, call for attention. Whereas it has not been possible to locate any information on this person in Mamluk sources, historiographical sources of the same period from the eastern Islamicate world speak about a person with precisely this name. He hailed from the region of Azerbaijan and served in Khurasān as a *nadīm* of the Timurid ruler Ḥusayn Bāyqarā to whom al-Sharīf likewise appears to have been connected.[308] In the social context of Ḥusayn Bāyqarā's court and his *majālis*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn made a name for himself as an expert of the Quran and a skilled composer of Persian verses.[309] Given the exact match in name, time, and social environment, it stands to reason that the Khawāja Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār in *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and the person mentioned in Timurid literature are one and the same man.

Our knowledge about Ghiyāth al-Dīn in the Timurid lands largely depends on the biographical works associated with Mīr ʿAlī Shīr Nawāʾī (d. 906/1501), which mainly cover the period up to 904/1498–9.[310] We have no information in Persianate sources about what happened to Ghiyāth al-Dīn in the first years of the tenth/sixteenth century when Timurid rule was disintegrating and the Safawid Shiʿis were on the rise. The evidence from *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, however, suggests that like al-Sharīf, the Sunni Ghiyāth al-Dīn relocated to

305   On the example of another itinerant scholar who joined al-Ghawrī's court society, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 106–10.

306   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 24.

307   *Dehdār* means "village headman," Junker and Alavi, *Wörterbuch* 335.

308   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.

309   Nawāʾī, *Majālis* 99; Niyāz Kermānī, *Ḥāfeẓ-shenāsī* vii, 51–2.

310   Subtelny, *Circle* 23–4. On Nawāʾī, his biographical work, and the tradition dependent on it, see Subtelny, *Circle*, esp. 19, 21–31; Lingwood, *Politics* 32–3.

Egypt and gained access to the court society of Sultan al-Ghawrī. While we do not know whether Ghiyāth al-Dīn managed to establish a long term patronage relationship with the Mamluk sultan, his example shows that al-Sharīf was not the only itinerant Persianate scholar to come to al-Ghawrī's court. In the early tenth/sixteenth century, the Mamluk court was apparently quite appealing to learned men from the east looking for patronage. Consequently, al-Ghawrī's court became on a social level closely entangled with other, especially Persianate courts of the Islamicate world. For al-Ghawrī and those around him, the presence of itinerant scholars such as Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who had attended the courts of other famous Muslim rulers and contributed to the refined court culture associated with them, was an important way of demonstrating that the Mamluk court was on a par culturally with its most well-known counterparts in the Persianate world.[311] The significance of this observation is not diminished by the fact that the openness of al-Ghawrī's court toward Persianate scholars was not unprecedented in Mamluk history, but rather constituted a continuation of earlier trends observable, inter alia, in the eighth/fourteenth century, when the Mamluk realm was likewise the destination of many itinerant learned men from the Islamicate east.[312]

Mamluk Cairo, with its manifold transregional political connections, attracted more than just itinerant scholars. As the center of the sultanate, it was also the destination of many foreign dignitaries and envoys. This applies also and especially to al-Ghawrī's reign, when Cairo, as a consequence of the numerous regional crises of those years, saw a multitude of diplomatic embassies. The travel accounts of European diplomatic embassies already discussed[313] are as illustrative in this regard as local Arabic works. Ibn Iyās writes that in the month of Rabīʿ II 918/June–July 1512, "among the marvelous things is that in this month, fourteen different envoys met with the sultan."[314] They included French, Venetian, Georgian, Ottoman, Safavid, Maghribī, Turkmen, Meccan, and Indian legates.[315] Similarly, al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* praises

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311   Note also the case of Shīrvānlı Ḥaṭiboğlu Ḥabībullāh, discussed above in section 3.3.2, who apparently hailed from present-day Azerbaijan and sought to join al-Ghawrī's court. On what it meant to be Persian in Mamluk Cairo under al-Ghawrī, see Mauder, Persian.

312   For pertinent examples, see, e.g., Amir, Niẓām al-Dīn; Amitai, Impact, 242–3; Binbaş, *Networks*, esp. 112–36; Haarmann, Arabic 92; Juvin, Qurʾānic *Ǧuzʾ* 111, 115–6; Levanoni, Supplementary Source 170–3, 175; Melvin-Koushki, How to Rule 150; Melvin-Koushki, Defense, *passim*; Melvin-Koushki, Powers; Melvin-Koushki, Talismanic Love, *passim*; van Steenbergen, Amir 440. For the broader context, see Petry, *Elite* 61–8.

313   Cf. section 3.4 above.

314   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 269. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1845–7.

315   On this passage, see also, e.g., Petry, Institution 464; and on diplomatic life under al-Ghawrī

al-Ghawrī as "the most magnificent sultan who brought together in his presence more than ten envoys, and seated them at his table and dining place […] at the same time. […] No sultan other than him brought [so many envoys] together."[316] Like Ibn Iyās, al-Malaṭī provides readers with a detailed list of the incoming emissaries.[317]

Foreign dignitaries and envoys were at times invited to join the sultan's *majālis*, thus linking the sultan's salons with wider communicative networks. For instance, both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* mention the participation of a South Asian emissary. While *al-Kawkab al-durrī* refers to him only as *qāṣid al-Hind* (the envoy from India),[318] *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* calls him "al-Sharīf Ḥusayn *qāṣid al-Hind*."[319] Without further information, it is difficult to ascertain the precise identity of this man, who, according to his name, might have been a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad.[320] From *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we learn that he was in Cairo in mid-Shawwāl 910/mid-March 1505. Although, in the context of the military conflict with the Portuguese, Ibn Iyās mentions the exchange of several diplomatic missions between the Mamluk Sultanate and South Asian Muslim rulers, all of these references are considerably later than Shawwāl 910/March 1506, with the first reference to al-Ghawrī's interest in South Asian affairs dating to Rabīʿ II 911/September 1505. In this month, the sultan gave orders to muster an expedition force to counter Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean.[321] Ibn Iyās does not mention where al-Ghawrī got his information about the European presence in this part of world. Yet, given that later military expeditions to this region were undertaken following pleas for help by local Muslim rulers,[322] perhaps al-Sharīf Ḥusayn's visit played a role in the mustering of forces in Rabīʿ II 911/September 1505.

According to our sources, al-Sharīf Ḥusayn was a learned man with an interest in Quranic exegesis. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* shows him particip-

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in general, see, e.g., Petry, *Protectors* 32–3, 55–6, 58, 60, 162; Petry, *Twilight* 174–80, 184, 195, 199–216, 220, 222–4.

316   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 4ᵛ.

317   On this passage, see also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 38–9.

318   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 18, 31; (ed. ʿAzzām) 13.

319   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 30.

320   Since *al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not mention the name of *qāṣid al-Hind*, it is theoretically possible that the texts speak about different people. However, this seems improbable, as it would mean that two different people with the same title and similar scholarly interests participated at roughly the same time in the sultan's salons.

321   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 82. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 84–5.

322   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 182–3, 185.

ating in a discussion on the proper interpretation of Q 37:23,[323] while in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, Ḥusayn engages in an exchange of opinions on the exegesis of Q 107:4–5[324] and suggests an interpretation of Q 5:116–7 in response to a question by al-Ghawrī.[325]

It is hardly surprising that al-Sharīf Ḥusayn's South Asian lord sent a man of Islamic learning as his envoy, given that al-Ghawrī employed well-versed members of his court society in the same capacity.[326] Through their choice of envoys, both parties highlighted their shared Muslim religious identity, which could serve as a uniting element in the fight against their common enemy, the Christian Portuguese sailors. Both sides used religious rhetoric to support their fight for hegemony in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The Portuguese presented their maritime activities as crusades,[327] while the Muslim parties could justify their actions as attempts to protect the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina and to ensure the security of the pilgrimage routes.[328] In such an atmosphere, an envoy able to stress the common religious bond between the Muslims of Egypt and India by discussing the correct interpretation of the Quran with the Mamluk sultan was a promising choice to ensure efficient communication between the courts.

To al-Ghawrī, the South Asian envoy's participation in his *majālis* must have been welcome for several reasons. By conducting religious discussions in front of and together with the emissary, al-Ghawrī could demonstrate his piety and learning as well as the splendor and refined culture of his court to the representative of a South Asian Muslim ruler, thus strengthening his bond with a potentially valuable ally. Moreover, inviting al-Sharīf Ḥusayn to the meetings of his inner circle gave al-Ghawrī an opportunity to honor the emissary without further straining his always limited financial resources. To the sultan's court society, the presence of al-Sharīf Ḥusayn in turn signaled that al-Ghawrī enjoyed an excellent reputation among the Muslims of distant regions. For the South Asian envoy, admission into the sultan's intimate circle undoubtedly constituted a major increase in status. Hence, al-Sharīf Ḥusayn's attendance in the *majālis* constituted a kind of communicative success for all parties.

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323   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 30.

324   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 17–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–4.

325   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 31.

326   See, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 182.

327   Har-El, *Struggle* 12–3; Bacqué-Grammont and Krœll, *Mamlouks* 21; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 27; Stripling, *Turks* 35.

328   See Weil, *Egypten* 391–5, on the religious component of the conflict from the Muslim perspective.

The highest-ranking foreign dignity to take part in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* was the Ottoman prince and possible heir to the throne Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī (d. 918/1513), son of Bāyezīd II and brother of Selīm Yavuz. Qurqud's life, including his sojourn in Egypt, is the subject of Nabil Al-Tikriti's 2004 dissertation. The present study relies on Al-Tikriti's work, but supplements it in relation to an important aspect of Qurqud's relations with al-Ghawrī and his court that remained unstudied by Al-Tikriti, namely the Ottoman prince's participation in the sultan's salons.[329]

Qurqud was born in the early 870s/late 1460s, most probably as the fifth of Bāyezīd's nine sons.[330] He made his first major appearance in Ottoman politics in 886/1481 when, after the death of his grandfather Meḥmed the Conqueror, he was placed on the Ottoman throne for a couple days as his absent father's substitute and to secure the latter's succession.[331] This step later allowed Qurqud to have titles applied to him that were usually reserved for reigning sultans.[332]

In 888/1483, Qurqud received his first position as Ottoman governor of one of the West Anatolian provinces, as was customary for male members of the ruling family during this period.[333] Most probably in 907/1502, Qurqud was transferred to the post of governor of Antalya Province; this brought him geographically closer to the Mamluk Sultanate.[334] He continued to serve here to the year 914/1509, when suddenly and without his father's permission, he boarded a ship and set sail for the Egyptian port of Damietta.[335] As Al-Tikriti notes, this was a highly unusual step for an Ottoman prince and Qurqud must have known that any unauthorized absence from his post could be understood as a sign of treason and rebellion against the incumbent ruler or as an indication that the latter had died and the violent struggle for succession among his descendants had commenced.[336]

Qurqud's reasons for his surprising move are not entirely clear. According to his own testimony, his sole motivation was the desire to go on the pilgrimage. To support this claim, the Ottoman prince, known as a learned author,[337]

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329   On Qurqud in Egpyt, see also Wiet, *L'Égypte* 620; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment* 22; Wiet, Princes 142–5; Petry, *Twilight* 180–4; Muslu, *Ottomans* 168–72. On his biography, see also Çıpa, *Making* 33–4, 44–5, 47–8, 53–4, 59–60, 63, 75–8.

330   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 49, 57–8. On Qurqud's early biography, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 48–100.

331   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 66–8.

332   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 68–70.

333   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 70.

334   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 80–1, 84.

335   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 235, 238.

336   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 235.

337   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 7–8. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 65; Al-Tikriti, Voice 73–4.

penned an Arabic treatise styled as a personal letter to his father in which he explained that the Prophet Muḥammad had told him to travel to the Hijaz, but that despite several petitions, Bāyezīd had not granted him permission. Therefore, Qurqud's obligations as a Muslim believer forced him to leave his post, even without his father's consent.[338]

Several points suggest that Qurqud was not completely sincere in claiming that the performance of the ḥajj was the sole reason for his trip. First, the prince left his province just after the pilgrimage rites of the year 914 had been completed and therefore, he had to spend almost one year in Mamluk domains before he could fulfill his religious obligation.[339]

Moreover, in the month Qurqud left for Egypt, rumors spread that Sultan Bāyezīd had died. This meant the inevitable succession struggle between Bāyezīd's four adult sons was imminent.[340] Qurqud's chances of emerging victorious were meager, given that his brothers had already managed to muster the support of influential groups: Qurqud's oldest surviving brother, Şehinşāh, apparently secured Safawid assistance,[341] while his brother Aḥmed was the candidate supported by highest echelons of the Ottoman administration and possibly also his father's most favored potential successor.[342] Selīm, who ultimately won the struggle among the brothers, was backed by large parts of the military and the Crimean Tatars.[343] Qurqud, however, only had the support of some naval forces and parts of the Ottoman scholarly and intellectual elite.[344] In light of this situation, an attempt to solicit the support of the Mamluks, who had not yet sided with one of the contestants, might have appeared to Qurqud as a promising option, even if he did not believe the rumors about his father's death.[345]

Third, Ibn Iyās indicates that Qurqud had come to Cairo to ask the Mamluk sultan to mediate between him and his father.[346] Given that Bāyezīd seems to have favored at least one of his brothers over Qurqud, the possibility that the latter hoped to improve his position with his father through Mamluk intercession cannot be discarded.

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338   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 236–7. On this unedited treatise, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 28–30, 244–56; Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 128–31.
339   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 239.
340   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 239.
341   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 281–3.
342   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 283–4. See also Çıpa, *Making* 70–5.
343   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 284–5. See also Çıpa, *Making* 78–101.
344   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 285–6. See also Çıpa, *Making* 75–8.
345   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 239. See also Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 138; Çıpa, *Making* 33, 77.
346   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* iv, 154. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 239.

Qurqud's decision to visit Egypt was not without precedent, given that several members of the Ottoman family came to the Mamluk realm during the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries.[347] Most famous among them was Qurqud's uncle Cem (d. 900/1495), who lost the succession struggle against his brother Bāyezīd, then fled to the Mamluk ruler Qāytbāy, stayed for several months in the Mamluk capital, and performed the pilgrimage under Mamluk protection.[348] Yet, unlike all the other Ottoman princes who had come to the Mamluk Sultanate, Qurqud was neither a defeated contender for the throne nor the offspring of a peripheral dynastic figure, but a hopeful, though not the most likely candidate for sultanic succession.

Although Qurqud claimed that he had received an invitation from al-Ghawrī to come to Egypt,[349] apparently, the Mamluk authorities were completely unprepared when the Ottoman ships arrived in the port of Damietta and they were initally mistaken for a trading expedition.[350] However, as soon as al-Ghawrī learned about Qurqud's arrival, he did his best to bid the Ottoman guest a memorable welcome. According to Ibn Iyās, al-Ghawrī dispatched a high-ranking delegation of Mamluk *amīr*s, together with numerous gifts and his own river boat, to greet the Ottoman prince and bring him to Cairo. Ibn Iyās noted: "No possible opportunity to honor [Qurqud] was left unexploited."[351]

When Qurqud and his retainers arrived in Cairo, al-Ghawrī housed his guest in a palace in Būlāq and provided him with everything necessary for his stay, including furniture, kitchenware, china, horses, and gold embroidered saddles.[352] Moreover, the sultan dispatched the highest *amīr*s of the realm and the four chief judges to welcome Qurqud.[353]

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347 Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 21, refers to a son of Qurqud who fled first to the Safawids and then to the Mamluks in 922/1516, but as Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 276, 284; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 49, 54, 63, 69, 116; make clear, he was a son of Qurqud's brother Aḥmed. On Ottoman refugees, see also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 372–3; Stripling, *Turks* 42; Winter, Occupation 496; Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 317; Jansky, Eroberung 198–9; Petry, *Twilight* 201–2; Brummett, *Seapower* 80; Har-El, *Struggle* 105–6; Wiet, Réfugiés; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 91–6; al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 4ʳ; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 139, 158; Muslu, Patterns 418–9; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment* 22–3.

348 For Cem's stay in Egypt, see, e.g., Wiet, Princes 139–41; Wollina, News 294–300; Hattox, Dilemma; Muslu, *Ottomans* 136–8; Har-El, *Struggle* 104–12, 115–21, 129–30, 136–7, 152–7, 197–200, 207–8; Darrāj, Jam 214–5, 218, 224, 231–2, 238; Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment* 22. For connections between Cem's and Qurqud's trips, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 240–1.

349 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 240.

350 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 240–1.

351 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 152. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 243–4.

352 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 153. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 256; Petry, *Twilight* 180.

353 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 153–4. Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 256–7; Petry, *Twilight* 180–1.

Ibn Iyās' account of the sultan's subsequent first meeting with Qurqud in Ṣafar 915/June 1509 is quoted here at length as it sheds light on a unique courtly event that deserves particular attention, given its communicative meanings and symbolic ingenuity:[354]

> Then, the sultan ordered the syndic of the army (*naqīb al-jaysh*) to go around to all the *amīr*s and inform them that the procession (*mawkib*) in the *ḥawsh* would be in full ceremonial dress (*bi-l-shāsh wa-l-qumāsh*).[355] Then, the sultan [...] gave orders to decorate the citadel at the Gate of the Armory (Bāb al-Zardkhānāh) with the sultanic standards and military equipment, and to line up the large cannons at the Gate of the Armory.
>
> Then, he ordered the meeter and greeter of guests (*mihmāndār*) and the captains of the guard to go to the Ottoman in full ceremonial dress and ascend with him to the citadel. They then went to Būlāq and let him ride from [...] [his residence to the citadel] on a horse with a gold saddle and saddle pad, with the sultan's near horses in front of him. [...] They traversed with him through [all of] Cairo. It was a spectacular day for him, and the people came out in large flocks to see him. This lavish procession went on until they reached the citadel. They went up with him riding until they came to the sultan's *ḥawsh*. [There,] he dismounted on the estrade of the Duhaysha Gate where a seat of silk had been prepared for him. He rested for a short time, about one *daraja*. Then, he entered the *ḥawsh* and when he came to the first stair treads, the sultan stood up from the bench and remained standing until the Ottoman reached him. Then, the two men embraced. It was said that the Ottoman kissed the sultan's hand and placed it on his eyes. Then, the sultan talked to him for an hour while standing. After the sultan awarded him a robe of honor (*khilʿa*) and left, he [that is, the Ottoman] rode away [...].
>
> Qurqud Bek was a young man in his forties, of medium height, with Arab features, a slightly yellow complexion, and a slender body. He had a black beard and was good looking. He wore a turban of Turkmen style that was smaller than the turbans of his companions. It was said that he was the oldest of the children of Bāyezīd the Ottoman.
>
> Moreover, when the sultan sent for a robe of honor, a robe was brought to him shot through with gold that was produced in the palace and

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354 On this event, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 257–9; Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 131–2; Petry, *Twilight* 181–2.

355 For the translation of this term, see, e.g., Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260; Ibn Iyās, *Alltagsnotizen* 110; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 51. On its two elements, see Mayer, *Costume* 58, 75–80.

glittered like lightning. It was put on Qurqud Bek the Ottoman. When he had ascended to the citadel, he had worn a dolman of yellow silk and above it an unfastened soldier's coat of green wool. This was removed from him and he put on the robe of honor. The sultan made great efforts to honor him highly. […]

Then, the sultan gave orders to the *amīr*s to descend together with Qurqud the Ottoman, and they descended with him […] until they arrived [at his residence] […]. Then, the procession dispersed and the sultan organized a lavish meal for him there. Moreover, he sent him 20,000 *dīnār*s—10,000 in silver and 10,000 in gold—and numerous bundles of valuable cloth from Alexandria, al-Manzala, and elsewhere. Then, the Ottoman sent the sultan thereafter a lavish gift, the value of which I do not know.[356]

Despite its obvious opulence, we should not misinterpret the reception of Prince Qurqud in the Mamluk capital as merely an indulgence in luxury. Rather, there are clear indicators that this was a carefully staged courtly occasion with manifold communicative significance. In analyzing the reception as a communicative event taking place in the citadel, that is, the symbolic heart of the Mamluk Sultanate, it is helpful to focus on the actors participating in it. Four parties are discernible: Sultan al-Ghawrī, Prince Qurqud, the *amīr*s of the Mamluk army, and the population of Cairo at large.

To the audience—here represented by Ibn Iyās—al-Ghawrī appeared as the central figure in the staging of the event. He is credited with giving the orders that shaped the first and the last phases of the event, that is, Qurqud's procession to and from the citadel. Furthermore, during the climax of the reception ceremony, that is, his personal meeting with Qurqud, al-Ghawrī was clearly one of the two central figures.

Ibn Iyās' account suggests that the sultan wanted to transmit at least four possible messages during this event. First, al-Ghawrī sought to demonstrate the military strength of the Mamluk Sultanate. To this end, he furnished one of the main gates of the citadel—presumably the one through which Qurqud entered the complex—with military equipment, and specifically large cannons. The presence of the cannons is especially significant, given that the Mamluks were known for their lack of artillery in comparison to the Ottomans and that al-Ghawrī, as seen above,[357] made considerable investments to remedy this situation. The demonstration of military strength did not end with this exhibition

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356   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 154–5.
357   Cf. section 2.1.2.2 above.

of the army's weaponry. By summoning all of his *amīr*s in full military regalia to Qurqud's reception, al-Ghawrī also displayed his army's strength in terms of manpower and leadership.

Closely interconnected with the message of military strength was the second point that the sultan visualized upon his first meeting with Qurqud: the wealth that he commanded and the largesse with which he used it. Numerous elements of the ceremony attest to this point: the gold saddle and saddle pad given to Qurqud, the choice horses trotting in front of him during his ascension to the citadel, his silk seating, his magnificent robe of honor, the lavish meal given in his honor, and finally—and most evidently—the huge sum of money and the valuable cloths bestowed on him. Al-Ghawrī's efforts to honor his guest evidently had a significant material component intended to highlight the sultan's affluence and generosity.[358]

Although military prowess, wealth, and largesse were qualities that almost every premodern Muslim ruler strove for, al-Ghawrī's attempts to highlight the military and material resources of the sultanate gained special significance given that during his reign, the Mamluk realm went through a period of economic contraction and military crisis.[359] This situation was most likely not lost to at least two groups of participants: Al-Ghawrī's *amīr*s must have known about the strained financial and military situation of the realm, and Qurqud was probably also aware that his hosts were experiencing economic and military hardships, given that the Ottomans saw it necessary to support their Mamluk neighbors with military goods and troops in their struggle with the Portuguese. Against this background, al-Ghawrī used Qurqud's reception to demonstrate to both the Ottoman prince and his military officers that the Mamluk Sultanate was still a military and economic force to be reckoned with. It is difficult to determine to what extent this message was also geared toward the population of Cairo at large, but given that Ibn Iyās paid a great deal of attention to these aspects of the event, they must have had a considerable impact on the sultan's non-elite subjects as well.

Another message the sultan sought to convey through this staging of the welcoming ceremony was mainly directed toward Qurqud. By allowing the latter to remain on horseback within the inner confines of the citadel, standing up to greet him, talking to him while standing, and even embracing the younger man, al-Ghawrī not only showed himself as a considerate host, but also accepted the Ottoman prince as his near equal. In this way, the sultan used his body

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358   For a hint at a similar interpretation, see Petry, *Twilight* 184.
359   Cf. sections 2.1.2 to 2.2.1 above.

as a communicative means to demonstrate his recognition of Qurqud's dynastic claims to the Ottoman throne. Perhaps the fact that Qurqud had already occupied this throne for a few days after his grandfather's death played a role in al-Ghawrī's decision to grant him these special privileges. Their significance, however, becomes most evident when we compare al-Ghawrī's reception of the Ottoman prince with the way Sultan Qāytbāy had welcomed Qurqud's uncle Cem: When the latter came to Qāytbāy, the sultan "did not rise for him, he [that is, Cem] did not come to the *ḥawsh* riding on horseback, and he [that is, Qāytbāy] did not bestow any lavish commodities on him,"[360] as Ibn Iyās noted. In contrast, al-Ghawrī wanted to assure Qurqud that he was aware of the fact that, as a hopeful contender for the Ottoman throne, he was in a fundamentally different position than his uncle Cem, who had visited Cairo as a militarily defeated refugee.

Still, the sultan did not go so far as to recognize Qurqud as his full-fledged peer. He showed this in a way that was not lost on Qurqud or the audience at large: In a double sense, al-Ghawrī did not descend to greet Qurqud, rather the latter had to come up to meet him: First, Qurqud had to ride up to the citadel from Būlāq, geographically one of the lowest points of greater Cairo. This obviously involved some physical exertion, since Qurqud was given an opportunity to rest before meeting the sultan. Moreover, when he met with the latter, Qurqud had to climb another set of stairs, while al-Ghawrī made no move to come down toward him. Here, al-Ghawrī employed height differences as spatial communicative instruments to express the differences in status between him and his guest. Moreover, while Qurqud was allowed to sit and rest before meeting the sultan, during the reception he was not given permission to sit in al-Ghawrī's presence—another spatial strategy that the sultan could have used to honor his guest, if he had wanted to.

Nevertheless, Qurqud was not necessarily the prime addressee of the ceremony the sultan staged. The fact that the sultan had his *amīr*s accompany Qurqud through Cairo before leading him up to the citadel demonstrates that the sultan strived for maximal visibility of his guest. The fact that Ibn Iyās' account presents Qurqud as literally being paraded through the streets of the Mamluk capital underlines this point. The population of Cairo, as the main addressee of the prince's procession, was obviously eager to see him. Al-Ghawrī demonstrated to them, by means of Qurqud's presence, that the Mamluk Sultanate in general and he as its sultan in particular were respected and recognized as

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360   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 155. See also Petry, *Twilight* 181–2.

transregional political players to whom even members of the mighty Ottoman dynasty had to show their deference.

Qurqud was, it seems, willing to play according to al-Ghawrī's rules. Throughout the ceremony, he styled himself as the Mamluk ruler's presentable and dignified, but modest guest. When meeting the sultan, he kissed the latter's hand as a sign of respect and put it on his eyes in a gesture expressing his trust in the Mamluk ruler's good intentions—at least this is what the people of Cairo told each other according to Ibn Iyās, and given that the sultan used the reception as a means by which to represent his rule, the general opinion was what counted.[361] For his part, Qurqud used a rather subtle, but highly significant strategy to make communicative statements within the framework predetermined by his Mamluk hosts: the choice of his clothing. Given that the size of one's turban was an indicator of social status in the Islamicate middle period,[362] Qurqud's selection of a comparatively small turban, superseded even by the headgear of the members of his own entourage, can be interpreted as a display of modesty. More important, however, was the rest of Qurqud's attire: When meeting the sultan, he chose to wear a yellow dolman and above it a green soldier's coat. The colors of the two pieces of clothing are highly significant: In the early tenth/sixteenth century, yellow had long been the color of the Mamluk Sultanate,[363] whereas green was associated with the Ottomans.[364] Thus, in his apparel Qurqud combined the distinctive colors of his own dynasty and that of his hosts.

But the significance of Qurqud's clothing went beyond this. Ibn Iyās notes that when al-Ghawrī awarded him a lavish robe of honor, Qurqud was stripped of his green coat before he put on the robe. This can be understood as a ritualistic performance of great symbolic significance, denoting and effecting a change of Qurqud's social status. For Muslims of the middle period, accepting a robe of honor constituted a formal acknowledgment of the superior rank and authority of its donor to whom they subsequently owed loyalty.[365] The

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361   On kissing as a basic element of symbolic behavior, see Althoff, Grundvokabular 152–3.

362   Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 89.

363   Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme 72–3; Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 217; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 15, 103–4, 159; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 147; Kühn, *Söhne* 112. See Petry, *Twilight* 181, for a different interpretation.

364   Cf. Deringil, *Ottomans* 141.

365   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 30, 32, 202. See also Mayer, *Costume* 62; Diem, *Kleid* 61, 67; Paul, *Herrschaft* 267. On the expression of differences in status among Muslim rulers through robes of honor, see Diem, *Kleid* 49–51. On robes of honor in the Ottoman realm, see Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 238–43; Dilger, *Untersuchungen* 96–9; Reindl-Kiel, Audiences

fact that Qurqud put on the robe demonstrated to all onlookers that he recognized the Mamluk sultan's higher rank and promised him fidelity. Moreover, by removing his green coat, Qurqud dispensed with or at least de-emphasized his Ottoman dynastic identity, which was replaced by his new social status as the sultan's guest of honor. By continuing to wear his yellow dolman during the entire event, Qurqud further expressed his acceptance of Mamluk rule over the space where the ceremony took place, as yellow was the color of the Mamluk Sultanate.[366]

The roles of the two other parties involved oscillated between those of audience and participants. The *amīr*s present had a communicative function to represent Mamluk military strength and al-Ghawrī's splendor, as seen above. At the same time, they were also the intended audience for much of what took place during the reception.

Similarly, the inhabitants of Cairo played a role by flocking to the city's streets and watching Qurqud's procession—if no one had witnessed the latter's parade, a significant aspect of the entire ceremony would have failed. With regard to events within the citadel, many of the people of Cairo probably had to rely on second- and third-hand information to find out what took place there, given that even a well-informed and interested contemporary such as Ibn Iyās lacked definite knowledge about significant details. Still, Ibn Iyās' case also shows that many aspects of what happened within the citadel were known to outsiders of the court and that the communicative significance of the event was not confined to a narrow elite. Moreover, the event attracted attention far beyond Cairo, given that Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, in his Mecca-focused chronicle, mentions Qurqud's honorable reception in Cairo and the robe of honor he received.[367]

Qurqud's reception was the most lavish, but certainly not the only courtly event that al-Ghawrī staged on the occasion of the prince's visit. In many of these events, the same aspects of our analysis of the reception feature again. Al-Ghawrī took care to arrange other occasions through which he could demonstrate Mamluk military strength to both Qurqud and domestic audiences, such as performances of Mamluk cavalry in the hippodrome and a demonstration by Mamluk archers.[368] In other instances, al-Ghawrī sought to display Mam-

186–195; and in Mamluk diplomatic ceremonial in general, e.g., Mayer, *Costume* 63–4; Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḫilʿa* 208, 217–9; Diem, *Kleid* 43–4; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 22–3.

366   On Qurqud's acceptance of Mamluk sovereignty, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 243.

367   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1684.

368   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 160, 164. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260–1.

luk largesse, wealth, and courtly splendor, as shown by banquets[369] and polo matches[370] organized for Qurqud as well as by the monthly stipend of 2,000 *dīnār*s[371] that the sultan granted the prince.[372]

Ibn Iyās also writes about a series of events that suggest that piety was another dimension to the way al-Ghawrī presented himself to Qurqud. While most premodern Muslim rulers tried to appear pious, al-Ghawrī took special care to stage events that would reflect favorably on his religious credentials, as discussed in detail below.[373] In Qurqud's case, demonstrations of piety were especially necessary, given that the latter was known to be an extraordinarily religious member of the Ottoman dynasty, one who strived to live in accordance with *sharīʿa* norms.[374] Hence, it is not surprising that the sultan invited Qurqud to several celebrations of religious holidays. Among these events, Ibn Iyās describes in great length the celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday in Rabīʿ I 915/July 1509:[375]

> On Friday the 11th, the sultan celebrated the Prophet's birthday. As usual, the *amīr*s and the four chief judges came together. Qurqud Bek was also present. When he came, the sultan rose and seated him on his right hand side on a higher level than himself, above the Shāfiʿī judge. On that day, the sultan wore full ceremonial dress. It was not customary for the sultan to wear full ceremonial dress on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday, but he did this because of the Ottoman. On that day, the sultan displayed great sublimity, in contrast to every [other] year.[376]

Accounts of other religious events celebrated by al-Ghawrī together with Qurqud, such as the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr (feast of breaking the fast)[377] and the Prophet's *mawlid* (birthday)[378] in the following year confirm that the sultan took spe-

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369   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157–8. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260.
370   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157–8. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260. On polo, see sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 below.
371   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 167, 186–7.
372   See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 259–62; Petry, *Twilight* 182–3.
373   See sections 5.1.1.1 to 5.1.1.3, 5.1.4.1, 5.1.4.2, and 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 below.
374   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 103. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 195, 198, 217.
375   On this event, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260. On the celebration of the Prophet's birthday at al-Ghawrī's court, see section 5.1.1.2 below.
376   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157.
377   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 167. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 166; Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 264.
378   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 184.

cial measures to observe these holidays more lavishly than usual. Thus, we can add piety to the qualities al-Ghawrī sought to demonstrate in his dealings with Qurqud.[379]

In addition to the events discussed thus far, there is another type of occasion in which the sultan and prince Qurqud participated, but which was largely hidden from Ibn Iyās' eyes, namely, the sultan's *majālis*. While *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was written before Qurqud's arrival, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* mentions him as contributing to several *majālis* discussions. Although we have only one Mamluk source indicating Qurqud's attendance at the *majālis*, independent confirmation of his participation comes from the Ottoman side, as Muṣṭafā ʿAlī (d. 1008/1600) mentions Qurqud's participation in these events as a well-known fact in his work on *majālis* etiquette.[380]

Qurqud's role in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is unusual in several ways. First, not all of his contributions noted in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were made in the sultan's *majālis*. Second, the questions that the Ottoman prince raised indicate an extraordinary high level of learning for a member of the ruling military elite. Third, the majority of his questions must have appeared quite frank, perhaps even provocative, to his Mamluk host.

Qurqud's first appearance in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is quite inconspicuous:

> **Question:** About the statement of Him Most High: "Glory to Him who made His servant (*bi-ʿabdihi*) travel by night from the sacred place of worship …" (Q 17:1). The son of the ruler of Rūm, the *amīr* Qurqud said: "Why did He say 'Glory to Him who made His servant' and did not say 'His Prophet' or 'His Messenger'"?
>
> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Because they did not accept his prophethood and did not believe in his mission. He was [at the time of the revelation of the verse] at the beginning of his calling and at the commencement of his prophethood, and the Arabs were denying his mission and his prophethood. If He had said 'His Prophet' or 'His Messenger,' then the unbelievers would have said: 'His Prophet [meant here] is Moses or Jesus, and you have nothing to do with this.' Therefore, He used an expression about which the Arabs would not have misgivings."[381]

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379   Al-Ghawrī and Qurqud also shared a common interest in religious poetry and music, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 17–8, 30–4, 230.

380   Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Gentleman* 95.

381   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 6–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4–5.

This exchange is quite typical for exegetical discussions in the *majālis*[382] and were it not for the identities of the two interlocutors, it would not deserve particular attention. However, at this point, what stands out is the presentation of Qurqud as posing a question to which the sultan replies, thus proving himself equal to his Ottoman guest's intellectual level and able to respond to points that were unclear to the prince. Similarly, the second passage mentioning Qurqud is, in itself, hardly noteworthy. It contains a short exchange between Qurqud and al-Ghawrī in which the former inquires why wearing red and yellow clothing is destestable. The sultan explains that the clothes of Pharaoh and Nimrod, the two arch-villains of pre-Islamic history, were red and yellow, respectively.[383]

Qurqud's third appearance in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is far more unusual, as it stands beyond the usual question-and-answer structure of the text. Preceded by the rubrication *ḥikāya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* states that when al-Ghawrī provided Qurqud with *mamlūk*s and concubines for his personal service, the latter did not accept them, but sent the sultan in reply a piece of writing (*kitāb*). In it, he explained that, based on a legal opinion of the Shāfiʿī scholar Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), one was not legally allowed to enjoy the services of male and female slaves, because the fifth on booty (*khums*) that according to Islamic law had to be paid to the treasury of the Muslims (*bayt māl al-muslimīn*) before the slaves' services became licit was not being correctly remitted.[384]

The Mamluk sultan might have been puzzled when he received this reply to what was intended as a generous gift. Perhaps al-Ghawrī did not know that the scholarly interests of his guest, which were noteworthy for a member of the Ottoman dynasty, had been directed for a considerable time to the question of whether and under what circumstances one was legally allowed to use the services of recently acquired slaves. As Ottoman governor, Qurqud was involved in sea raids (sg. *ghazāʾ*) in the eastern Mediterranean which often resulted in the capture and enslavement of non-Muslims.[385] In an effort to solve some of the legal questions arising from this practice and to direct Ottoman maritime violence into channels conforming to the stipulations of Islamic law, Qurqud wrote a comprehensive legal treatise on the treatment of war booty.[386]

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382   See section 4.2.2 below.

383   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 35.

384   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 39; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16–7.

385   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 101–3, 136; Al-Tikriti, *Ḥall* 126–8, 140–1. For the historical background, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 103–36.

386   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 137–9. For summaries and contextualizing analyses of the work, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 139–52; Al-Tikriti, *Ḥall*.

This Arabic text, which survived in a single copy in Istanbul[387] and can be accepted as the prince's genuine work[388] is entitled *Kitāb Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār fī ḥill amwāl al-kuffār* (Book of the solution of intellectual difficulties concerning the proper disposal of infidel property).[389] Al-Tikriti argued that it was written between 915/1509 and 918/1513 and therefore might be a product of Qurqud's sojourn in Cairo.[390] Its contents suggest that *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār*—or an excerpt or draft version of it—was the *kitāb* mentioned in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, given that in this text, Qurqud offers a painstaking discussion of how booty acquired in military conflicts should be distributed and under what circumstances it could be used and sold legally; in it, he pays particular attention to the status of—especially female—slaves. The text makes it clear that Qurqud regarded most, if not all related practices current in his time, as illicit, a point he sought to prove through ample quotations from earlier, primarily Shāfiʿī authorities.[391] In particular, Qurqud explained at beginning of the work, quoting al-Juwaynī, that in his time, one was not allowed to have sexual intercourse with concubines because rulers were generally unable to extract the *khums* on them and use it as stipulated by Islamic law.[392] Thus it appears entirely plausible that the piece of writing sent in reaction to al-Ghawrī's gift as mentioned in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* was closely connected to, if not largely identical with *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār*, although it must be acknowledged that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not quote the preserved version of the latter work verbatim.

In reaction to Qurqud's refusal to accept his gift, the sultan, rather than being angry, took up the scholarly challenge presented by Qurqud's written reply. According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the sultan wrote—or, given its length and sophisticated character, possibly had written for him—a legal counter-opinion defending the permissibility of his gift by adducing relevant prophetic precedents, while at the same time taking Qurqud's concerns seriously and even accepting parts of his argument.[393] Apparently, the sultan tried to prove that he was in fact Qurqud's scholarly equal by replying in kind with learned reflections on the topic. At least in the view of the author of *al-Kawkab al-*

387   MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 1142.

388   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 24, 27, 29–30, 139.

389   The translation of the title is from Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 137.

390   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 137; Al-Tikriti, Ḥall 131.

391   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, Ḥall, fols. 1ᵛ–51ᵛ. See also Al-Tikriti, Ḥall 131, 141; and on Qurqud's interest in and familiarity with Shāfiʿī thought, see Al-Tikriti, Voice 74, 78, 87, 95.

392   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, Ḥall, fols. 2ʳ–2ᵛ. See also Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, Ḥall, fols. 7ᵛ, 27ᵛ; Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 141–2; Al-Tikriti, Ḥall 133.

393   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 39–40; (ed. ʿAzzām) 17.

durrī, the sultan's move was successful, as the text states: "The reply of our lord the sultan was sent to Qurqud. He was dumbfounded by the reply and defeated."[394]

Yet, the debate did not end there. Unnamed participants in the debate further supported the sultan's point of view by bringing forth a pertinent *fatwā* by Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), which *al-Kawkab al-durrī* reproduces at length.[395] This *fatwā* dealt explicitly and extensively with al-Juwaynī's objections against intercourse with concubines captured during military conflicts and explained the conditions that would make it permissible.[396] The text thus challenged Qurqud's opinion that it was prohibited, while concomitantly calling for a close observation of the pertinent legal rules when dealing with concubines.

In his *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār*, the Ottoman prince took up the challenge posed by his unnamed Mamluk court interlocutors who quoted the *fatwā*. The preserved manuscript of Qurqud's text contains a lengthy addendum (*khātima*) after what is clearly marked as the end of the treatise proper. It begins as follows: "Know that, after I reached this point, I became aware (*waqaftu ʿalā*) of questions from Aleppo to which *shaykh* Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī replied."[397] The addendum then quotes al-Subkī's legal opinion largely as it appears in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and offers further relevant material, also by al-Subkī, as well as arguments in support of the more restrictive views represented by al-Juwaynī.[398] Notably, at least two of the authorities named in this addendum were of Egyptian background and lived in Qurqud's time.[399] The unusual way in which Qurqud appended this section to the treatise indicates that the main part of the text had been completed when the exchange about al-Ghawrī's gift of slaves took place.

In the present context, the legal details of the highly technical discussion about slave-related practices between Qurqud, al-Ghawrī, and the unnamed members of the latter's court are of less interest than what this debate tells us about al-Ghawrī's court and Qurqud's role in it. First, the exchange underlines that the Ottoman prince and his hosts had common scholarly interests

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394   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 40; (ed. ʿAzzām) 17.

395   On al-Subkī's *fatwā*s, see Calder, *Jurisprudence* 116–200.

396   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 40–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18–24. The quoted text could not be located in the available editions of al-Subkī's *Fatāwā*.

397   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥall*, fol. 51ᵛ.

398   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥall*, fols. 51ᵛ–59ᵛ. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 151–2; Al-Tikriti, *Ḥall* 139–40.

399   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 151; Al-Tikriti, *Ḥall* 140. On Qurqud's contacts with Egyptian scholars, see also Al-Tikriti, *Voice* 78.

and participated in a shared social reality even before their first direct encounters. What we know about the internal chronology of *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār* leads to the conclusion that Qurqud had addressed questions about the permissibility of using the service of slaves well before he received al-Ghawrī's gift. For the sultan and his court, any legal arguments that challenged contemporaneous practices of slaving naturally must have been of immense relevance, if only because of the importance of slavery for the Mamluk military and political system. Moreover, both sides apparently shared the understanding that the right way to address these issues was through the technical language of Islamic law, in which they had acquired a high level of proficiency before their first interactions. Second, the discussion constitutes an example of the seriousness and sophistication of legal debates at al-Ghawrī's court. It shows that members of the Mamluk court discussed legal questions under al-Ghawrī's guidance and with his active participation in a way that induced a learned outsider such as Qurqud to incorporate arguments exchanged at court into a highly specialized learned treatise, even after he had already completed his work on the text. Third, at least for the Mamluk side, the debate was important not only, or indeed primarily, for the legal insights reached, but because al-Ghawrī had bested his Ottoman guest in a scholarly competition—at least if we are to trust *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which was written under the sultan's patronage. Fourth, the close similarities, to the point that there was overlap between *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār*—a text that was, for all that we know, never intended to cast a positive light on the intellectual sophistication of the Mamluk court—support the conclusion that we can rely on *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to study key aspects of court life under al-Ghawrī.

According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the rejection of the sultan's gift of slaves was not Qurqud's only challenging gesture vis-à-vis his host:

> **Question:** When Qurqud Bek, the son of Khān Bāyezīd saw the Quran copy (*muṣḥaf*) from the hand of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān in which was a trace (*athar*) of his blood—may God be pleased with him—he said: "There is no doubt that blood is legally impure. How then can you leave this blood in the noble *muṣḥaf* and not wash it off?"[400]

As seen above, in the late Mamluk period this copy of the Quran was a highly respected religious artifact that fulfilled an important function in political cul-

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400   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 144; (ed. ʿAzzām) 44–5.

ture as the object on which members of the military swore oaths.[401] Much of
its significance was based on the fact that it was believed to have been written
by ʿUthmān precisely at the time of his murder and that the blood stains on it
are from this event.[402] Hence, one can imagine that a Mamluk audience would
not react favorably to the idea of washing the codex, thereby threatening both
its physical integrity and its religious importance. According to *al-Kawkab al-
durrī*, al-Ghawrī replied:

> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "This Quran copy is the
> basic model (*imām*) of all Quran copies in the world and according to the
> scholars, jurisprudents, and Quran readers, was written by the hand of
> ʿUthmān. If we washed it, then [its] desirable quality would vanish. There-
> fore, we willingly do wrong here in a little thing so that the great benefit
> does not vanish. At any rate, a little blood can be excused and according
> to some legal teachings, more than a *dirham* is allowed."[403]

In this reply, the sultan seems to agree that the blood stain on the book might
be a legal problem, but he also points out that if the Quran copy was washed,
it would lose its special quality. Therefore, it seems better to accept its defile-
ment than to endanger its unique character. In the final sentence of his answer,
the sultan suggests that the blood on the book does not pose a serious legal
problem, given its negligible quantity. Thus, according to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*,
Qurqud raised another point of discussion that was particularly sensitive for
his Mamluk host, but again, the latter was able to preempt Qurqud's argument
by finding a response to disconcert the prince.

The fifth instance in which Qurqud appears in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is similar
in so far as the Ottoman prince brought up another sensitive issue, this time
from the field of *kalām*. Again, however, the sultan is presented as overcom-
ing Qurqud's challenge through his intelligence and learning. As the passage in
question is important for our understanding of the role of *kalām* at al-Ghawrī's
court, it is discussed in detail below.[404] At this point, however, two observations
are noteworthy: First, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* states that the discussion in ques-
tion took place on the occasion of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday, which
as seen, the sultan celebrated together with the Ottoman prince. Second, Qur-
qud's interest in *kalām* is confirmed by his Arabic writings, one of which deals

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401   Cf. section 2.1.2.1 above.
402   Meri, Relics 116. On the murder of ʿUthmān, see Hinds, Murder.
403   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 144; (ed. ʿAzzām) 45.
404   See section 5.1.4.2 below on Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71.

with a theological topic encompassing the very question over which he conversed with the sultan.[405]

Taken together, Qurqud is presented in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* as a highly learned guest who repeatedly challenged the sultan on scholarly matters. In the ensuing intellectual duels, the sultan not only appears as the Ottoman prince's intellectual equal, but even refutes the Ottoman's points of view or lectures him on the correct solution to a given problem.

This version of the outcome of the debates is without doubt informed by the general purpose of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, namely, to present al-Ghawrī as a wise and well-versed ruler. What better intellectual sparring partner for the sultan could its author find than a possible heir to the Ottoman throne known for his learning and piety? In addition, by showing the sultan as intellectually superior to Qurqud, the author may have intended to make a statement about the qualities of Mamluk and Ottoman rulers more generally.[406]

There is evidence from independent Mamluk and Ottoman sources confirming that Qurqud did take part in al-Ghawrī's salons. It stands to reason that a man of his learning with the scholarly ability to write a sophisticated legal treatise such as *Ḥall ishkāl al-afkār* would actively participate in the discussions held there. The sultan was most probably pleased by Qurqud's willingness to join his scholarly *majālis*. As shown above, al-Ghawrī used other courtly events to demonstrate his virtues, such as military prowess, largesse, and piety to the Ottoman prince. The *majālis* offered him an opportunity to exhibit to Qurqud the scholarly competence of the members of his court society and, according to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, also his own knowledge. Hence, we can interpret the program of events that al-Ghawrī organized for his Ottoman visitor as a well-thought through communicative campaign that served to represent al-Ghawrī as an ideal ruler.

Why did al-Ghawrī invest so much time and resources to impress Qurqud and what benefits could he hope to derive from his communicative campaign? As son of the sitting Ottoman ruler Bāyezīd and governor of an important province, Qurqud might have supported Mamluk attempts to secure much needed military supplies to combat the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Qurqud was instrumental in securing Ottoman help for Mamluk military activities against the Iberian sailors.[407]

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405   On Qurqud's interest in *kalām*, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 8, 62.

406   Mamluk authors viewed the Ottoman ruling elite in general as poorly educated in religious matters, cf. Muslu, *Ottomans* 153, 174. See also section 6.2.2 below.

407   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 134–6, 278–80.

In the long-term, there was much more for al-Ghawrī to win: If Qurqud managed to emerge victorious from the succession struggle—possibly with Mamluk support—, the Ottoman Sultanate would be ruled by a man not just favorably disposed toward the Mamluks, but indeed, indebted to them as his former hosts. The strategic, political, and economic advantages such a scenario entailed must have been abundantly obvious to al-Ghawrī and members of his court society.[408]

Yet, as noted above, treating Qurqud well was also beneficial for al-Ghawrī from a domestic perspective, given the increase in prestige that Qurqud's presence in Cairo occasioned. Qurqud was evidently aware that al-Ghawrī used his presence in Cairo to boost his standing with his court society and his subjects more broadly; this we know based on the Ottoman prince's complaint to his father that al-Ghawrī used him to glorify himself.[409]

Qurqud's sojourn in the Mamluk realm did not develop as the prince had wished. When the pilgrimage caravan of 915/1510 left for the Hijaz, Qurqud did not participate—a fact noted even in Mecca and Medina, where the population had expected to welcome him.[410] Bāyezīd did not give permission for his son's pilgrimage and instead sent a proxy, as was possible according to some legal scholars.[411] Bāyezīd's continued rejection of Qurqud's desire to go on the pilgrimage put al-Ghawrī in a delicate situation:[412] Should he heed the wishes of the present Ottoman ruler, who had shown in the past that while interested in a peaceful coexistence with the Mamluks, he would not hesitate to go to war against them if necessary?[413] Or should he follow Qurqud's biddings to undertake the pilgrimage, even against his father's orders?

Al-Ghawrī decided that it was better not to enrage the Ottoman ruler; therefore he kept Qurqud in Cairo. Al-Ghawrī did not even grant Qurqud permission to visit Jerusalem, since his father did not allow such a trip and it was suspected that Qurqud's real intentions were to defect to the Safawids.[414]

Having reached an impasse, Qurqud began with preparations for his return to Ottoman territory. In lengthy negotiations, the Mamluk and the Ottoman side agreed on the conditions of Qurqud's return.[415] In Rabīʿ II 916/July 1510,

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408   See also Brummett, *Seapower* 72–4.
409   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 266. See also Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 134. The letter is edited and translated in Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 373–82.
410   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1684, 1691.
411   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 264–5. On pilgrimage by proxy, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 238.
412   On the questions raised by Qurqud's presence in Egypt, see also Petry, *Twilight* 180.
413   Winter, Occupation 492–3.
414   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 265–7.
415   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 268–9. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 270–5; Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 134–7.

Qurqud received al-Ghawrī's permission to leave Cairo and after a last procession through the streets of Cairo together with all the leading *amīr*s and the captains of the guard, Qurqud left for Rosetta.[416]

Although Ibn Iyās considered the honors al-Ghawrī had bestowed on Qurqud excessive,[417] the sultan's strategy initially appeared to pay off. The Mamluks continued to receive Ottoman military supplies for their fight against the Portuguese,[418] and there is evidence that Qurqud played an instrumental role in this.[419] Moreover, Venetian sources suggest that Qurqud and al-Ghawrī had concluded a formal agreement of mutual support.[420] In the long run, however, it became clear that al-Ghawrī had supported the wrong prince. After Bāyezīd's death, Qurqud lost the succession conflict with his brother Selīm and was killed in 919/1513.[421] Thus, al-Ghawrī was not only deprived of a potential ally on the Ottoman throne; but in fact, Selīm's decision to invade the Mamluk Sultanate might have been informed, at least partially, by al-Ghawrī's earlier siding with his brother.[422] If this is correct, al-Ghawrī's attempts to establish good relations with the Ottomans by hosting Qurqud and using various communicative means to impress him had backfired tremendously.

To sum up, the presence of itinerant scholars, diplomatic envoys, and foreign dignitaries had considerable influence on the cosmopolitan character of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, given the key role these people played in connecting the Mamluk court society with its transregional communication partners. At the same time, the attendance of envoys and members of foreign dynasties underscores that these events were not only of scholarly, but also of political importance.

4.1.2.4   People on the Periphery: Musicians, *mamlūk*s, Servants, and Jesters

Many of the people discussed so far would have been known to posterity for their political, scholarly, or literary achievements, even without their participation in the *majālis*. The situation is fundamentally different for most, if not

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416   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 186. On Qurqud's return trip, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 269, 275–7.

417   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 186–7. See also Petry, *Twilight* 183. Wiet, Princes 145, agrees with Ibn Iyās here.

418   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 271; Petry, *Twilight* 184.

419   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 135–6, 276, 278–80; Al-Tikriti, Ḥall 128–30.

420   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 279.

421   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 306. On the succession struggle and Qurqud's death, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 287–310; and on Selīm's way to the throne, see Çıpa, *Making* 29–61.

422   This has already been suggested in Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fol. 3ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 22. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 280, 328; Al-Tikriti, The Ḥajj 138; Weil, *Egypten* 407; Petry, *Twilight* 184.

all of the members of the marginalized social groups that we focus on now. There is a good chance that historiography would have passed over these individuals in silence. If they appeared in historiographical works at all, then most probably it would be as nameless members of their respective social groups. Indeed, even in our sources on the *majālis*, many of these people remain without names. With a very few exceptions, they share another common feature: they do not speak for themselves in our sources, rather they are spoken about—a fact that highlights their position on the periphery of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and the social asymmetry that characterized their participation in these events.

As indicated above, music played an important role in the salons.[423] Yet in general, the people who played instruments or sang for the sultan remain unknown to us. Even *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, which among all of our sources includes the most detail on music during the *majālis*, provides hardly any tangible information on al-Ghawrī's musicians, apart from generic praise of their skills.[424] In most cases, we cannot even be sure about the musicians' gender, since the language of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* does not feature grammatical gender. As has become clear, the *majālis* were a predominantly male social space, given that all the attendees discussed thus far were men. This is hardly surprising, as women in Mamluk society existed largely in what van Steenbergen and D'hulster called the "'invisible' sphere."[425] If women participated in the *majālis* at all, there is a good chance that they did so as musicians. Female musicians, often called "singing girls" (*qiyān*), constituted an important element of ʿAbbasid court life.[426] Female musicians were also a feature of Mamluk cultural life and played a role at the courts of Mamluk leaders.[427] For al-Ghawrī's reign, Ibn Iyās mentions two female singers[428] who, according to Carl Petry, were "esteemed at court."[429]

However, there is no clear evidence that female musicians took part in the *majālis*. The only musician whose attendance can be established is a man: Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qijiq and his musical skills were not only thoroughly

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423   See section 4.1.1 above.

424   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1990.

425   D'hulster and van Steenbergen, Family 63.

426   Recent studies on ʿAbbasid "singing girls" include Imhof, Traditio; Richardson, Girls; Gordon, Courtesans; Myrne, Prospects; Nielson, Visibility; Gökpınar, *Musikkultur*.

427   Rapoport, Women 9–11, 14.

428   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 258.

429   Petry, *Protectors* 185. The basis of this statement is not clear. At least for the second of the two mentioned singers, the aforementioned passage in Ibn Iyās does not include any evidence for a closer connection between the musician and Mamluk ruling circles.

noted in *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, they were also acknowledged by Ibn Iyās, who mentions him four times.[430] Three of these references deal with a legal dispute in which Muḥammad b. Qijiq received the sultan's support.[431] More relevant here is Ibn Iyās' fourth passage on the musician:

> On Sunday, the 18th [of Ramaḍān 920/6 November 1514] al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad b. Qijiq, the sultan's boon companion (*nadīm*), died. He was very well-versed in playing the mandolin (*ṭunbūra*) and an expert in composing melodies. He had a kind personality and was beloved by the people. His funeral procession was well attended. The notables from among the people took part in it, including all of the notables of the singers of the city and the instrumental musicians, as he had been their master (*shaykh*). [Moreover,] he had been one of the *muqarrabūn* of the sultan.[432]

Other sources provide additional information about Ibn Qijiq who, according to his father's name, was probably of Turkic origin,[433] and his relationship with Sultan al-Ghawrī. *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* states:

> Another one [of the participants] is a master, oh beloved [reader],
> For whom the arts of [all] countries are simple. [...]
> Muḥammad, the son of Qijiq is his name. [...]
> His fame spread from the city of Aleppo,
> And neither non-Arabs nor Arabs know someone like him. [...]
> Whichever art may ever be, he is perfect in it. [...]
> Really, he knows all languages of the creation,
> He has become an interpreter of every language.
> Today, he is composing books.
> His are well-written literary works.
> The *muwashshaḥ* poems that he wrote,
> Are of novel meaning and memorable expression.
> Everywhere, these *muwashshaḥ* poem[s] are read,
> Which feature exquisite expressions and faultless meanings.

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430   D'hulster, Sitting 252–3; Flemming, Perser 82–4; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 27, discussed aspects of al-Ghawrī's relationship with Muḥammad b. Qijiq. The present study goes beyond their findings by relying on additional sources.

431   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 124–5, 321, 326.

432   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 401.

433   D'hulster, Sitting 252.

> Whenever that master is singing,
> One shouts at him meanwhile "Well done!" […]
> Day and night he strives for the sultan's service (*hidmet*),
> He is his companion in his service (*hidmetindedür*) for a long time.
> Having served him (*idüpdür hidmetini*) for years,
> He is still not tired of praising him with his words.
> The great king's *majlis* (*meclis-i shāh*)—may God prolong his live—
> Is honored by his [presence].[434]

Apart from the praise of Muḥammad b. Qijiq's skills, here the translator makes the following noteworthy points: (1) Before coming to Cairo, Ibn Qijiq spent time in Aleppo. (2) He spoke several languages. (3) In addition to being a talented musician, he was also a gifted writer, composing, inter alia, *muwashshaḥ* poems—a fact that might explain, in part, why he received more attention than other musicians. (4) He had established a long-term patronage relationship with al-Ghawrī, as indicated by the recurring term *hidmet*.

Al-Ghawrī's Ottoman Turkish *dīwān* preserves a *muwashshaḥ* poem that Muḥammad b. Qijiq had composed together with al-Sharīf, the translator of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*. In it, the authors congratulate al-Ghawrī on his recovery after an illness.[435] This poem corroborates al-Sharīf's statement about Ibn Qijiq's literary activities and shows that the two men were apparently on rather close terms.

Further information on the relationship between Muḥammad b. Qijiq and al-Ghawrī appears in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Here, Ibn Qijiq features in four episodes about the sultan's early life. A side note in the account of al-Ghawrī's birth states: "al-Shamsī Muḥammad b. Qijiq preceded all others of his [that is, the sultan's] servants (*khuddām*) [in serving the sultan]."[436] Later, we learn how al-Ghawrī and Muḥammad b. Qijiq met: According to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, when he was a simple rank-and-file soldier, Sultan Qāytbāy sent al-Ghawrī to the *amīr* Jānibak Ḥabīb (d. 893/1487–8).[437] The latter was known for his cultural interests and held the middle-rank position of deputy master of the stables (*amīr akhūr thānī*) under Qāytbāy, to whom he was particularly close.[438] Qāytbāy gave al-Ghawrī the following instructions:

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434   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iv, 1990–1.
435   Cf. Flemming, *Nachtgesprächen* 27–8, for a transliteration and translation.
436   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 53ʳ.
437   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 75ᵛ–76ʳ.
438   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 241.

'Tell him [that is, Jānibak]: You explained that a stranger, who is the master of the musicians (*ahl al-ṭarab*), came from the direction of Aleppo. He knows Turkic and speaks Arabic and Persian. He is an expert in composing melodies, although he is still in his youth, and skillful in all [kinds] of music, despite the difficulty [of this field].'

The text continues:

> Then, Jānī Bak [*sic*] sent our lord Muḥammad b. Qijiq with [al-Ghawrī] so that he could add to the honor of him whose victory may be glorious [that is, al-Ghawrī] by serving (*bi-khidma*) the [now] deceased sultan [that is, Qāytbāy].⁴³⁹

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya does not provide a clear date for this incident. Yet, since the section describing it precedes a passage about the death of Qāytbāy's famous *amīr* Yashbak min Mahdī who died in 885/1480, it seems plausible that the meeting between al-Ghawrī and Ibn Qijiq took place in the early to middle 880s/late 1470s. Thus, the future sultan was probably in his early thirties when he first became acquainted with the musician.

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya goes on to explain that Muḥammad b. Qijiq had served both Qāytbāy and al-Ghawrī and cites six Arabic and four Ottoman Turkish verses by Ibn Qijiq in praise of al-Ghawrī. Moreover, the text states that Jānibak Ḥabīb was particularly fond of Ibn Qijiq, such that he would not allow him to leave his house except to visit al-Ghawrī. Furthermore, we learn that Ibn Qijiq was married to a Circassian woman.⁴⁴⁰

Let us review what we know about Ibn Qijiq in chronological order. In his youth, while living in Aleppo, Ibn Qijiq gained considerable fame as a skilled musician. He then moved to Cairo, where he was attached to the *amīr* Jānibak Ḥabīb, who was interested in cultural matters. Subsequently, Sultan Qāytbāy became aware of the young musician and took him into his service. According to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, al-Ghawrī, who was at that point a simple soldier, was instrumental in this important step in Ibn Qijiq's career, as he was the envoy who requested that Ibn Qijiq be sent to Qāytbāy. Consequently, a close personal relationship developed between Ibn Qijiq and al-Ghawrī.

It is unclear what happened to Ibn Qijiq when his original patron, Jānibak Ḥabīb, died in 893/1487–8, but it seems possible that the musician became a

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439   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 76ʳ (both quotations).
440   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 76ʳ–76ᵛ.

client of al-Ghawrī, who shortly after Jānibak's passing away received his promotion to a junior officer rank and thus had the necessary means to support a modest circle of clients. After al-Ghawrī became Mamluk ruler in 906/1501, the two men maintained their close personal relationship. Ibn Qijiq regularly attended al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and was known as the sultan's boon companion (*nadīm*). This is hardly surprising, given that the sultan and Ibn Qijiq had known each other for more than twenty years and had many things in common: They were both interested in music—Ibn Qijiq as a renowned professional, al-Ghawrī as a well-known connoisseur. Moreover, both men were multilingual and composed Turkic and Arabic *muwashshaḥ* poems. Through his marriage to a Circassian woman, Ibn Qijiq had established a further connection to al-Ghawrī and the latter's ethnic group. Finally, it is clear that Ibn Qijij and al-Ghawrī were both in close contact with al-Sharīf, the translator of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*. This probably explains why Sharīf mentioned Ibn Qijiq and his skills in the epilogue of his work.

It seems plausible that over the many years that the sultan and Ibn Qijiq knew each other, some kind of affectionate relationship developed between the two men. Yet, whatever friendly feelings might have existed between the sultan and Ibn Qijiq, the latter was also the ruler's client, as al-Sharīf makes unambiguously clear by repeatedly using the term *hidmet* when describing Ibn Qijiq's position relative to the sultan. Ibn Qijiq could hope to obtain both economic and social capital through this patronage relationship, which must have added to his prestige among the population of Cairo. Indeed, we should most probably read Ibn Iyās' statements about the broad participation in Ibn Qijiq's funeral and his being the master of the musicians of Cairo in light of his patronage relationship with the sultan.

Yet, al-Ghawrī profited from being Ibn Qijiq's patron, too. In addition to enjoying Ibn Qijiq's musical performances for his own amusement, the latter's presence enhanced the entertainment value of the sultan's salons for its other attendees. Moreover, having the most famous musician of Cairo among his *majālis* participants must have boosted both al-Ghawrī's prestige and that of the sessions he convened. Through Ibn Qijiq's attendance and performances, the sultan could present himself as a refined and sophisticated ruler. The sultan was at least partially successful in this, as is confirmed by the fact that Ibn Iyās lists al-Ghawrī's love for music among the sultan's commendable qualities, as seen above. Finally, Ibn Qijiq was also valuable to the sultan for his capacity as an author: through his works, he contributed to the representation and legitimation of al-Ghawrī's rule.

The case of Ibn Qijiq is interesting for at least two further reasons. First, it illustrates again what Ulrich Haarmann called the "cosmopolitan atmo-

sphere"[441] of al-Ghawrī's court. In spite of the fact that Ibn Qijiq seems to have spent at least part of his youth in Aleppo, both his name and the fact that he knew Turkic well enough to compose poems in it point to the conclusion that he was not local and most probably of Turkic origin. Again, we see that al-Ghawrī's court society consisted to a considerable degree of people who through their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds connected the sultan's court to regions of the Islamicate world beyond the frontiers of the Mamluk Sultanate.

Second, the example of Ibn Qijiq demonstrates the importance of a broad source basis for the study of al-Ghawrī's court. If we had to rely for our analysis on only one source—such as, for example, Ibn Iyās' chronicle—it would be difficult to comprehend the role this musician played as a member of al-Ghawrī's court society. However, by bringing together pieces of information from various sources, it becomes possible to understand more deeply the reasons this man was a valued member of the sultan's *majālis* and why he became the only member of the otherwise marginalized social group of al-Ghawrī's musicians that we know by name.

Two other social groups that played a largely marginal role in the sultan's *majālis* were *mamlūk* recruits and servants. The former belong to the few members of the Mamluk military who, apart from the sultan, took part in the salons, which were generally civilian in character.[442] This observation is somewhat surprising, given the high-profile presence of military men among the members of al-Ghawrī's court society. There are several possible explanations for their absence in the *majālis*: First, every high-ranking member of the Mamluk military was a potential candidate for the sultanate and thus a latent threat to al-Ghawrī's status. Granting these men access to his personal quarters might have constituted a considerable security risk to al-Ghawrī, especially since none of our sources indicates that members of the sultan's bodyguard were present during the salons. Second, many of the highest-ranking officers of the Mamluk army did not share al-Ghawrī's interest in scholarship and thus might have found the learned *majālis* discussions somewhat tedious, and would have been unable to make relevant contributions. Third, if we assume that some of al-Ghawrī's *amīr*s were likewise interested in learned matters, then their presence in the *majālis* would have undermined the sultan's status as the only

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441   Haarmann, Miṣr 175.

442   The only exception is the celebration of the Prophet's birthday in 911/1505–6 which al-Sharīf describes in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Many of the members of the Mamluk military listed in appendix 2 only took part in this special session, analyzed in section 5.1.1.2 below.

Mamluk member of his circle who united, in his person, scholarly competence, political authority, and military prowess.

Therefore it seems understandable that the only members of the military who regularly attended the salons were recruits, who could hardly pose a threat to al-Ghawrī's position. In all five cases in which *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions *mamlūk* recruits attending the sultan's *majlis*, they remain nameless. Moreover, their presence is always connected to learning activities. The pertinent text passages are given here in chronological order:

> Second *majlis* of the sixth *rawḍa*: "In that night, […] the young (*ṣighār*) *mamlūk*s recited (*qaraʾū*) in front of our lord the sultan."[443]

> Tenth *majlis* of the seventh *rawḍa*: "Shaykh ʿAbbās came together with two *mamlūk*s, one of whom had learned by heart (*ḥafiẓa*) the *ʿibādāt* according to the school of Abū Ḥanīfa—may God have mercy on him— and the other had learned by heart the Quran."[444]

> Eleventh *majlis* of the seventh *rawḍa*: "Ibn ʿIfrīt came with two young *mamlūk*s and presented them (*ʿaraḍahum, sic*) to His Noble Station [that is, the sultan]."[445]

> Eleventh *majlis* of the ninth *rawḍa*: "The young *mamlūk*s came and recited in front of our lord the sultan, group (*jawq*) after group, and no debate took place during that night."[446]

> Fourth *majlis* of the tenth *rawḍa*: "The young *mamlūk*s were brought, and they recited in the *majlis*."[447]

Mamlūk recruits apparently participated in the *majālis* mainly to meet the sultan and demonstrate their educational progress by reciting texts. At times, people who seem to have been involved in their training, such as Shaykh ʿAbbās and Ibn ʿIfrīt,[448] introduced them. While occasionally, only a couple—possibly

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443   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 111; (ed. ʿAzzām) 32.
444   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 164; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61.
445   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 166; (ed. ʿAzzām) 63.
446   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 225; (ed. ʿAzzām) 107.
447   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 237; (ed. ʿAzzām) 116.
448   See below for further information about Ibn ʿIfrīt. On Shaykh ʿAbbās, see section 3.1.2.3 above.

those who were particularly gifted or advanced—*mamlūk*s would attend the *majlis*, at other times, the sultan seems to have held full-fledged mass exams by having larger groups of *mamlūk*s brought to him. Such mass exams could be so time-consuming that the sultan would spend the entire *majlis* reviewing recruits, with no time left for scholarly debate.

In one instance, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* provides us with information about what the recruits had learned before attending the sultan's *majlis*: the Quran and "the *ʿibādāt* according to the school of Abū Ḥanīfa." It is hardly surprising that recruits would memorize the Quran, given what al-Maqrīzī tells us in his valuable passage cited above, that the training of young *mamlūk*s "began with the book of God Most High."[449] Likewise, Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī (d. 888/1483) mentions that instruction in the Quran was one of the basic elements of the training of newly recruited slave soldiers.[450] Being exposed to the Quran from an early age onward, it is easy to see how gifted *mamlūk*s could learn the entire text by heart.[451]

As for "the *ʿibādāt* according to the school of Abū Ḥanīfa," it is unclear whether al-Sharīf means by this phrase a particular work—as the term *ḥafiẓa* and the parallel reference to the Quran would suggest—or rather legal rules on *ʿibādāt* (religious observances) according to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* more generally. Based on what we know about the non-military education of *mamlūk*s, either alternative is possible. Mamluk slave soldiers usually belonged to the Ḥanafī school and, as al-Maqrīzī mentions, were introduced to the aspects of Islamic law that were relevant for the fulfillment of religious obligations.[452] A recruit might have learned the respective instructions by heart to present them to the sultan.

If al-Sharīf's reference in the quoted passage is to a specific work, he most probably means a text such as Abū l-Layth Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī's (d. 373/983) *al-Muqaddima fī l-ṣalāt* (Introduction to the ritual prayer) of which al-Ghawrī's library included a copy in 47 folios with a mixed interlinear Oghuz-Kipchak Turkic translation,[453] or, less likely, a longer work such as Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Ghaznawī's (d. 593/1196) *Muqaddima fī l-ʿibādāt ʿalā madhhab Abī Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān* (Introduction to the religious observances according to the

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449   Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii, 692. See section 3.1.2.3 above.

450   Al-Qudsī, *Duwal al-Islām* 128.

451   On *mamlūk*s who engaged in Quranic studies, see Mauder, *Krieger* 122–8.

452   Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii, 692.

453   MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 1451 [non vidi]; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Traité*. See also Eckmann, Literatur 301; Eckmann, Literature 314; van Ess, Abu'l-Layṯ Samarqandī 332–3; D'hulster, Sitting 232; Flemming, Activities 257; Atanasiu, Phénomène 262.

school of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān), which provides a thorough outline of this field of religious law, in about 400 handwritten pages.[454] Al-Maqrīzī indicates that recruits could have had access to such a work, as he states that "when one of [the young *mamlūk*s] reached the age of adolescence, the expert of religious law [in charge of him] taught him about the science of law and read an introductory work (*muqaddima*) about it with him."[455] Memorizing a work such as one of those mentioned would have constituted a significant achievement for a young recruit—something that could impress the sultan.

The anonymous *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* indicates that al-Ghawrī's troop reviews during his *majālis* were part of a larger pattern, as it refers to several instances in which young *mamlūk*s demonstrated their learning progress before larger audiences often, though not always, including the sultan. The text speaks about three events in which recruits displayed their skills in the recitation of the Quran, of *dhikr* formulas, and of al-Ghawrī's *muwashshaḥ* poems; two of these events were apparently attended by the sultan.[456] During another session of Quranic recitation, recruits were at least present, if not actively involved, together with their teachers (*muʿallimūn*) from the Ibn al-ʿIfrīt family.[457]

In taking a special interest in the academic and religious education of his *mamlūk*s, al-Ghawrī presented himself as a considerate and pious ruler. Moreover, by partially turning his *majālis* into troop reviews, he considerably widened the circle of witnesses and participants of these events, although the inclusion of members of the Mamluk military remained rather restrictive. Nevertheless, even this limited participation of soldiers suggests that the sultan did not view his salons as events accessible only to a small fraction of his court society, but at times he was willing to open them up to his court more broadly. Finally, the recruits' participation in the *majālis* linked these events to other courtly educational activities, as discussed below.[458]

While *mamlūk* recruits could achieve a certain degree of visibility in the sources on the sultan's *majālis*, free and unfree servants attending these events do not receive a single mention in these texts. It is clear that someone must have prepared the spaces in which the *majālis* took place, served food to the attendees, and cleaned up after them. Yet, from our sources, we learn nothing about the people taking care of these tasks. Nevertheless, in our analysis of the

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454   Information based on MS Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Arabic 890.
455   Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii, 692.
456   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 258ʳ–258ᵛ, 276ᵛ–277ʳ, 281ᵛ–283ʳ.
457   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 267ᵛ.
458   See section 4.4 below.

majālis we should not pass over them in silence, be it only for their role as an unintended audience of what was said and done there.[459]

In addition to musicians, *mamlūk*s, and servants, there is one further person who, according to our sources, stood on the periphery of the attendees of the *majālis*. This is true although this enigmatic figure is neither nameless nor silent in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the only one of our sources to mention this individual. Moreover, he seems to have played a unique social and gender role in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, thereby linking these events to the heyday of ʿAbbasid court life. The *kunya* that the text uses to refer to this person indicates that we are dealing with a character that stands out from the other *majālis* participants. Three forms of what is clearly the same name appear in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*: "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan," "Umm Abī l-Ḥasan," and "Umm al-Ḥasan." The last two forms follow the grammatical rules of Classical Arabic and seem to refer to a person of female gender. However, in total, these versions of the *kunya* appear only half as often as the ambiguous form "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan,"[460] which is curious for at least two reasons: First, it stands in conflict with the grammatical rules of Classical Arabic, which stipulate that the elements of a *kunya* have to be connected through an *iḍāfa*. In the case of a *kunya* consisting of three words, the second word thus must be a genitive *status constructus* form, that is, in this case "Abī" and not "Abū." While we could translate "Umm Abī l-Ḥasan" as "the mother of al-Ḥasan's father," it is not possible to render the form "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan" into correct English provided we assume that the rules of Classical Arabic apply.[461] If we try to do so, we would arrive at the translation "the mother/the father of al-Ḥasan." Since "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan" features repeatedly throughout the text, it cannot constitute a scribal error. Moreover, in one instance, vowel marks in the manuscript clearly indicate that the name should be read as given here.[462]

Our attempt to translate the *kunya* into English as "the mother/the father of al-Ḥasan" points to a second question: What is the gender of a person with this name? While the two other forms of the *kunya*, as mentioned above, seem to refer to a female person, the more frequent "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan" is ambiguous,

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459   On unfree domestic servants in Mamluk society, see now Hagedorn, *Slavery*.

460   "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan" appears twelve times, "Umm al-Ḥasan" five times, and "Umm Abī l-Ḥasan" once.

461   Note, however, that "Abū" is at times considered indeclinable in early and middle Arabic, cf. Hopkins, *Studies* 156–8; Blau, *Emergence* 128, 267. I thank Michael Cook (Princeton) for pointing this out to me and providing me with the quoted references.

462   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230. The only other known attestation of this name comes from a Judeo-Arabic text from the Cairo Geniza, where a person of this name—in this case, clearly a woman—is mentioned as the receiver of alms, cf. Cohen, *Voice* 156.

and there is evidence that "Umm Abū l-Ḥasan" was actually a man: Throughout the text, all pronouns and verbal forms referring to this person have the male grammatical gender. Moreover, in three cases, the text calls Umm Abū l-Ḥasan a *shaykh*.[463] Finally, there are two cases in which the *kunya* in question appears together with the clearly male personal name (*ism*) Aḥmad.[464]

While especially this last point shows that Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was viewed by his contemporaries as a man, there remains the fact that his *kunya* is gender ambiguous. Provided we assume that the rules of Classical Arabic apply, we can interpret Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's *kunya* as a conscious attempt to play with the gender boundaries of late Mamluk society. The use of this *kunya* could constitute a strategy to express a gender identity that did not easily translate into the binary categories of "male" and "female."

Yet, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan is noteworthy for more than just his name. As a regular participant in al-Ghawrī's salons, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* recounts his numerous contributions. These mostly fall into two categories: statements bordering on the absurd or considered funny on the one hand and outspoken opposition to the points of view of the sultan and some of his intimates on the other. In quantitative terms, statements of the first category predominate. These include the following examples:

> **Strange incident (*gharība*):** A debate took place about what the final level of the rise of the Nile would be. Some people said: "22 cubits." Umm Abī l-Ḥasan said: "I saw the water [of the river] in the al-Qarāfa [Quarter]."[465] Our lord the sultan said: "This is nonsense, as even if the water rose to 25 cubits,[466] the water would not reach al-Qarāfa."[467]

> His Excellency our lord the sultan said: "Yesterday, Umm al-Ḥasan was with me and said: 'I saw in a house in the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn [Street] 70,000 hares (*arnab*).'" Our lord the sultan was puzzled by the strangeness (*gharāba*) of this talk. I [that is, the first-person narrator] said: "Our lord the sultan, all of what he says and knows is indeed comparable to this."[468]

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463   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16, 239–40; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16, 116, 118.

464   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 239–40; (ed. ʿAzzām) 116, 118.

465   Here, al-Qarāfa denotes an area of Cairo located far from the Nile, to the northeast and east of the citadel.

466   In the late Mamluk period, a maximum level of 25 cubits would have resulted in a disastrous flood, as 20 cubits was already considered high, cf. Borsch, Floods 133.

467   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 217; (ed. ʿAzzām) 97. In that year, the Nile reached a level of slightly less than 20 cubits, which was considered a blessing, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 83.

468   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 232–3.

First question: Our lord the sultan said: "What it the literal meaning of *ashtātan* [in Q 99:6]?"[469]

    Answer: Umm al-Ḥasan said: "Upon resurrection, it will rain human semen (*minan*) for forty days."[470]

    Refutation: I said: "Such talk must not be included in replying to a question of our lord the sultan!"

    Inquiry: Our lord the sultan said: "Shaykh Aḥmad [that is, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan], do you want to confuse what I say and ask?"[471]

**Lie (*kidhb*)*:* Umm al-Ḥasan said: "At my mother's wedding, people prepared stuffed vegetables the size of a camel head." It was said to him: "How could you be at your mother's wedding?" I said: "I married my mother after my father […]." Thereupon His Excellency the sultan laughed and was happy.[472]

As these examples show, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's contributions oscillated between the moronic, the humorous, and the obscene. Likewise, the sultan's reactions varied: According to *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, he found Umm Abū l-Ḥasan sometimes amusing, but at times also bluntly rejected the latter's far-fetched or irrational statements.

    Al-Sharīf's stance toward Umm Abū l-Ḥasan varied less: Throughout his text, he consistently appears as the latter's adversary. This is the case in terms of the events he recounted and with regard to the narrative strategies he used in doing so. Employing terms such as "nonsense," "lie," or "strange incident," he clearly seeks to direct his readers' interpretation of the following descriptions of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's behavior toward a negative understanding. Moreover, as illustrated by the third of the quotations, the first-person narrator appears in the accounts of the sultan's *majālis* as an adversary of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan trying to convince the sultan of the former's unsuitability for courtly conversation.

    The antagonism between the first-person narrator and Umm Abū l-Ḥasan becomes even clearer when we turn to those instances where the latter dis-

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469   *Ashtātan* is the accusative plural of *shatt* meaning "separated, dispersed." Abdel Haleem translates Q 99:6 as "On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups (*ashtātan*) to be shown their deeds."

470   Here Umm al-Ḥasan seems to suggest that on the day of resurrection, humans will be transformed back into the semen from which they were created according to Q 86:5–7. This semen will then be dispersed as indicated by the term *ashtātan*.

471   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 240; (ed. ʿAzzām) 118.

472   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 249.

agreed with points of view held by al-Ghawrī and other *majālis* attendees. In every such instance narrated in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the first-person narrator sides, explicitly or implicitly, with Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's opponents.[473]

From the example of a debate about the political status of the Mamluk sultans vis-à-vis the ʿAbbasid caliphs of Cairo, it is clear that such debates touched on issues sensitive for the sultan. As we analyze the details of this discussion, which is of considerable importance for our understanding of Mamluk political culture under al-Ghawrī, further below,[474] it suffices here to focus on Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's role in it.

Throughout the debate, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan appears as the *advocatus diaboli* casting doubt on all arguments that other participants—including, especially, the first-person narrator—bring forth to corroborate the Mamluk sultans' precedence over the ʿAbbasid caliphs. When the first-person narrator voiced his view that the sultan, if present at a funeral, was the individual most entitled to lead the prayer, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan objected and argued that this should be the caliph's privilege. Later, when he stated that key elements of Muslim social and religious life, including marriage contracts, were invalid in a country with a sultan who had not received caliphal investiture, he again opposed the first-person narrator's position.[475] All of this was clearly also contrary to the interests of al-Ghawrī and those around him, who, as we see below, strived to establish an independent basis for sultanic rule that would sidestep and eventually overshadow the ʿAbbasid caliphate. To this end, al-Ghawrī and members of his court tried to show that the legitimacy of sultanic rule explicitly did not rest on caliphal appointment, as Umm Abū l-Ḥasan suggested.[476]

Later, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan is presented in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as supporting the exclusive entitlement of the ʿAbbasid family to the caliphate. He thereby again defended a position at odds with the view of the first-person

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473 It is difficult to determine whether and to what degree this antagonistic relationship had an impact on Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's representation in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* beyond the elements already mentioned, especially since we lack parallel sources, including information on Umm Abū l-Ḥasan. However, the fact that Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's behavior and his contributions to the debates reflect, at times, negatively on Sultan al-Ghawrī and al-Sharīf speaks in favor of the reliability of al-Sharīf's accounts, as it seems implausible that his narration would include elements opposed to his most important authorial intentions of praising both the ruler and himself, if these elements did not go back to his experience of what took place in the *majālis*. On this point, see also section 3.1.5 above.

474 See section 6.2.3 below.

475 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 220–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 100–1.

476 See section 6.2.3 below.

narrator and the sultan endorsed the opinion that other, non-ʿAbbasid rulers could legitimately claim caliphal status, too.[477] The situation further escalated when Umm Abū l-Ḥasan ventured to state that "The point of pride [that raises] the sultan of Egypt over the [other] sultans of the world is that he is the caliph's deputy."[478] Thereby, he reduced al-Ghawrī, whom members of his court society saw as the most powerful Muslim ruler of his time, to the status of the deputy of a man whose rank was, in late Mamluk times, little more than symbolic in character. In doing so, he not only violated the sultan's pride, but also engaged in a frontal attack on the independent legitimacy of the latter's rule. Needless to say, his view was rejected by the other attendees of the *majlis*, including the first-person narrator. When Umm Abū l-Ḥasan then made a statement that could be interpreted as casting doubt on the justice of al-Ghawrī's venerated former master Qāytbāy, the sultan exclaimed, according to al-Sharīf: "When did you meet Sultan Qāytbāy and when did you attend his *majlis*? [...] For what reason do you sit in the middle of [my] *majlis* and talk so much? Get up!"[479] Umm Abū l-Ḥasan nevertheless remained in his place and said: "The marriage contracts of the Muslims in Egypt are only valid thanks to the appointment [of its sultan] by the caliph."[480] The sultan thereupon announced that he would hand Umm Abū l-Ḥasan over to the chief judges for punishment. Only the intercession of other members of the court society spared Umm Abū l-Ḥasan further consequences and secured the sultan's pardon.[481] Nevertheless, a week later Umm Abū l-Ḥasan again challenged the sultan's authority by entering his *majlis* uninvited and making an absurd contribution to an ongoing debate.[482]

Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's behavior in the sultan's *majlis* is without precedent or parallel in our sources. Even the dispute that prompted al-Ghawrī to dismiss al-Sharīf and the other attendees of his *majlis* narrated at the end of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is not nearly comparable to what Umm Abū l-Ḥasan did, given that the latter not only had heated debates with other participants in the salons, but also directly attacked al-Ghawrī's claims to exalted political status and the memory of his venerated former master. Later, he openly violated the sultan's order by entering his *majlis* without permission. As a reader of *Nafāʾis*

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477   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 222; (ed. ʿAzzām) 103.
478   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 110.
479   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 231; (ed. ʿAzzām) 111–2.
480   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 231; (ed. ʿAzzām) 112.
481   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 232; (ed. ʿAzzām) 113.
482   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 238–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 116–7.

majālis al-sulṭāniyya, one may wonder how Umm Abū l-Ḥasan got away with his life given his track record of disrespectful behavior.

Let us summarize what we know about Umm Abū l-Ḥasan: Though bearing a clearly male *ism*, his gender identity was somewhat ambiguous, as his *kunya* indicated. Moreover, many of his contributions to the sultan's salons were humorous, obscene, or absurd and at times managed to amuse al-Ghawrī. However, in other instances, his behavior was bluntly disrespectful of the ruler, with some of his statements shaking the latter's claim for independent political legitimacy to the core.

To make sense of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's communicative function in al-Ghawrī's court, a look beyond the frontiers of the Islamicate world can be helpful. European court societies of roughly the same period often included a figure that had numerous characteristics in common with the description of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, namely, the figure of the court jester. From the seventh/thirteenth century onward, court jesters played an increasingly important role at European courts.[483] Among other elements, they helped to fight boredom by performing sometimes harmless, sometimes obscene jokes.[484] Qua their social role, they were also allowed to behave differently than everyone around them,[485] using their proverbial "fool's license" to satirize and mordantly mock other members of the court, including the ruler.[486] Transgressing social boundaries constituted a fundamental element of their role at court.[487] Through humor and wit, they contributed to a peaceful coexistence and the playful diffusion of social tensions at court, although, given their low status, they could always suffer humiliation and retaliation at the hand of other members of the court.[488]

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483   On the early development and spread of this court office, see Paravicini, *Kultur* 16–7; Velten, Hofnarren 65–7; Barwig and Schmitz, Narren 252–5. On its demise, see Müller, *Fürstenhof* 25; Velten, Hofnarren 68. Already in antiquity, jesters were active at Egyptian, Chinese, Roman, Near Eastern, and Greek courts, cf. Velten, Hofnarren 65. On Chinese jesters, see Möller, *Rolle*.

484   Velten, Hofnarren 65, 68. See also Velten, Hofnarren 66. On jesters and the obscene, see also Barwig and Schmitz, Narren 256; and on boredom at European courts, see Müller, *Fürstenhof* 39, 57; Daniel, *Hoftheater* 29, 34; Winterling, *Kurfürsten* 160–2; Paravicini, *Kultur* 70; Paravicini, Alltag 17–8.

485   Velten, Hofnarren 65.

486   Müller, *Fürstenhof* 25.

487   Velten, Hofnarren 65.

488   Velten, Hofnarren 66. On self-deprecation and court jesters, see Guo, *Performing Arts* 50.

References to the "unmanliness"[489] of court jesters are a recurring element of their representation in European sources.[490] Their status in between the male and the non-male makes them an example of what Victor Turner called "liminal *personae*" or "threshold people."[491] Turner explains:

> The attributes [...] of liminal *personae* [...] are necessarily ambiguous, since [...] these persons elude or slip through the networks of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.[492]

In his discussion of liminality, Turner relied explicitly on Max Gluckman's work on court jesters:

> [T]he court jester operated as a privileged arbiter [...] given license to gibe at king and courtiers [...]. Normally they were entitled to mock at anyone in the midst of their tales and jokes [...]. [T]he jesters mix with their fooling acute commentaries on the foolishness and foibles of their employers, and even on their evil-doings [...]. In a system where it was difficult for others to rebuke the head of a political unit, we might have here an institutionalized joker [...] able to express feelings of outraged morality.[493]

The similarities between European court jesters and Umm Abū l-Ḥasan are evident: Like a court jester, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan amused the members of al-Ghawrī's court society, including the ruler, with his sometimes witty, and at other times obscene remarks. Sometimes, his contributions clearly violated social boundaries, as was typical for court jesters as well. In such cases, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, like European jesters, had to fear the consequences of his behavior. At the same time, he was one of the very few people who could dare to openly criticize the ruler. Moreover, the gender identities of European court jesters and Umm Abū l-Ḥasan were, to a certain degree, ambiguous.

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489   Bayless, Tale 193.
490   Bayless, Tale 192–3.
491   Turner, *Process* 95.
492   Turner, *Process* 95. See also Turner, *Process* 94–6, 106–7.
493   Gluckman, *Politics* 102–3. Also see, in part, Turner, *Process* 109–10.

Yet, given the considerable differences between late Mamluk and contemporaneous European societies, we must ask whether there is evidence that people comparable to European court jesters existed in premodern Islamicate court societies. As Geert Jan van Gelder showed, jesters and buffoons are not uncommon in premodern Arabic literary works, especially in relation to court contexts. Both Umayyad and ʿAbbasid rulers were known to have jesters (sg. *muḍḥik*) in their entourages, and the same is true of pre-Islamic Persian kings. These jesters entertain kings and caliphs with witty remarks, funny poems, and imitations of animal voices.[494] To a large extent, the men functioning as jesters were men of some social standing, including members of ruling families.[495] Moreover, many of them appear in the sources as poets respected for their literary skills.[496]

To what extent the stories examined by van Gelder reflect the actual existence of court jesters in premodern Islamicate societies is difficult to determine, as the study also indicates: "[I]n all Arabic anecdotal literature there is a high but uncertain proportion of fiction represented as fact, and this is surely higher than average in the case of jokes and anecdotes on jesters."[497] Hence, the material van Gelder analyzed is of only limited value for a study of the historical phenomenon of the court jester in the Islamicate world.

Even if we consider van Gelder's material historically reliable, it is obvious that the court jesters he studied differ from Umm Abū l-Ḥasan and their European namesakes, as van Gelder's jesters were often of comparatively high social status, functioned as jesters-cum-poets, and had unambiguous gender identities. Hence, while highlighting the existence of jesters and buffoons in premodern Islamicate literature, van Gelder's valuable study does not fully explain the peculiar figure of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan.

To gain a deeper understanding of this enigmatic figure, we should instead return to the court culture of the ʿAbbasid period, which, as noted,[498] served as a model for many later Islamicate courts. In his article "Gender Irregularity as Entertainment: Institutionalized Transvestism at the Caliphal Court in Medieval Baghdad" (2003) Everett K. Rowson studied the role of the so-called *mukhannathūn* at the ʿAbbasid court. The origins of this social group go back to pre- and early Islamic Arabian society, where people known by this term were

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494   Van Gelder, Fools 27–31. On *muḍḥikūn* and related groups, see also Moreh, *Theatre* 64–72.

495   Van Gelder, Fools 30–2.

496   Van Gelder, Fools 31–6. See also Rosenthal, *Humor* 15.

497   Van Gelder, Fools 33. For a differing evaluation of parts of the relevant material crediting it with a higher degree of reliability, see Rosenthal, *Humor* 6, 14–6.

498   See section 1.2.1 above.

active as musicians and entertainers in the cities of the Hijaz. Probably as a result of persecution by political authorities, references to *mukhannathūn* are largely unknown from the later Umayyad period, but reappear several decades later in the context of the ʿAbbasid court.[499]

In this later period, the term *mukhannath* was used "to refer to an institutionalized irregular gender role, represented by males who publicly adopted feminine modes of dress as well as behavior and felt it as an identity with both personal and corporate dimensions."[500] At the ʿAbbasid court, people belonging to this group were active as musicians like the earlier *mukhannathūn* of Arabia, but in general, they were more esteemed as witty conversation partners and entertainers.[501] With regard to a particularly well-known *mukhannath* from the time of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61), Rowson states that this figure "functioned essentially as the court jester or buffoon of the caliph."[502] The *mukhannath* in question entertained al-Mutawakkil with "jokes, mimes, and, perhaps, skits [...]. He became a fixture at court for many years [...], although with some long interruptions occasioned by the sharpness and audacity of his humor, which induced more than one caliph, including al-Mutawakkil, to banish him for a time."[503] Many of the jester's jokes had sexual connotations or were outright obscene.[504] Furthermore, some of his gags showed a lack of respect for venerated figures of Islamic religious history and members of the ruling elite that can only be described as daring.[505] While the connection between *mukhannathūn* on the one hand and the witty and the obscene on the other is particularly well documented for this *mukhannath* of al-Mutawakkil's court, it was so generally established in the ʿAbbasid period that it found expression in proverb-like turns of phrase.[506] Similarly, mocking, sharp wit, and wicked humor were traits of behavior closely associated with ʿAbbasid *mukhannathūn*.[507] One further element that singled out *mukhannathūn* was their names: in addition to their regular male *ism*s, they bore

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499   Rowson, Irregularity 46–7. See also Rowson, Irregularity 56–7; Kugle, *Homosexuality* 255. On early *mukhannathūn*, see Rowson, Effeminates; Kugle, *Homosexuality* 91–7, 249–50, 252–7.

500   Rowson, Irregularity 56.

501   Rowson, Irregularity 57. See also Rowson, Effeminates 693; Moreh, *Theatre* 32.

502   Rowson, Irregularity 57.

503   Rowson, Irregularity 58. See also Rowson, Effeminates 693.

504   Rowson, Irregularity 58–9.

505   Rowson, Irregularity 58–9. See also Moreh, *Theatre* 89–90.

506   Rowson, Irregularity 59. For an example of such a turn of phrase based on the alleged passive homosexual behavior of many *mukhannathūn*, see the same passage.

507   Rowson, Irregularity 61–2.

names that were either ambiguous in terms of gender or clearly female.[508] Moreover, *mukhannathūn* were, even as members of the caliphal court, generally of very low social status.[509] Their "lack of dignity freed them, however, from numerous constraints, and enabled them to serve as clowns and entertainers of other sorts, who could be vastly amusing without having to be taken seriously."[510]

While the history of *mukhannathūn* in the post-ʿAbbasid period remains to be written, we know that people identified by this term and bearing female names also existed in the Mamluk period[511] and that later *mukhannathūn* were still closely linked to various forms of entertainment and merry-making.[512] Rowson concludes: "In broad terms [...], it is apparent that [...] the *mukhannath*, always associated with music, wit, and profligacy, persists as a recognized figure for many centuries, and indeed still exists today."[513]

Against this background, it makes sense to view Umm Abū l-Ḥasan as a jester figure in the tradition of the ʿAbbasid *mukhannathūn*. Like the latter, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan served as a ruler's entertainer, amusing him with witty remarks and obscene jokes. However, at times, like the ʿAbbasid *mukhannathūn*, he would overstep social boundaries and incite the ruler's wrath, who would then temporarily expel him from his presence. Yet, despite this always present danger of annoying the ruler, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was, as were earlier *mukhannathūn*, in a unique communicative situation that allowed him to say and do things that other members of the ruler's court society could not—at least if they wanted to avoid a permanent fall from the ruler's grace. Indeed, Scott Kugle's description of the courtly role of earlier *mukhannathūn* seems to fit Umm Abū l-Ḥasan perfectly: "They spoke out against [...] rulers, who had ursurped power [...], in ways that other Muslims could not; their unusual gender identity allowed them [...] to deflate the egoistic claims of rulers whose legitimacy was highly questionable."[514] In fulfilling this role, his particular social status exposed Umm Abū

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508   Rowson, Irregularity 57–8, 63. See also Rowson, Effeminates 678, 681; Moreh, *Theatre* 89.

509   Rowson, Irregularity 63–4.

510   Rowson, Irregularity 63.

511   Rowson, Narratives 180, 182; Rowson, Liaisons 205. On *mukhannathūn* from the Ottoman period, see El-Rouayheb, *Homosexuality* 17, 21–2; and on gender bending behavior in Mamluk courtly contexts, see Guo, Cross-Gender 169–74.

512   Moreh, Mukhannathūn 548; Moreh, *Theatre* 22, 25–6, 75. Monroe, Striptease 122, discusses a sixth-/twelfth-century poem presenting a *mukhannath* as a "laughingstock, a buffoon." See also Rowson, Narratives 180.

513   Rowson, Irregularity 65.

514   Kugle, *Homosexuality* 254.

l-Ḥasan to ridicule and humiliation, but at the same time protected him from some of the more severe consequences of his behavior.[515]

Yet, while these characteristics also pertained to many other jesters, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's peculiar name connects him directly to the *mukhannath* tradition. Like the *mukhannathūn* of the Prophet Muḥammad's time and the ʿAbbasid period, Shaykh Aḥmad Umm Abū l-Ḥasan bore a name that placed him between the male and the female. Together with the license to transgress social boundaries and reverse accepted conventions, his ambiguous gender identity placed him at the fringe of society and between its accepted social categories. Thus, he combined liminal gender status with a marginal position in the sultan's court society.[516] Yet, his ability to transgress boundaries and upend social roles not only contributed to the comical character of his behavior, but also allowed him to fulfill more far reaching functions. As Michael Chamberlain argued, the actions of marginal figures in premodern Islamicate societies "had much in common with the rituals of reversal and transgression seen in many other pre-industrial societies. Such reversals, by inverting the normal order, paradoxically often serve to affirm it. The ribald performers seen on the margins of many premodern societies often enjoyed a kind of immunity as a result."[517] This immunity, which quite closely resembled the "fool's license" of medieval European court jesters, enabled Umm Abū l-Ḥasan to perform reversals of the established social order of al-Ghawrī's court in a way that did not fundamentally threaten, but rather stablized it, given that his subversive actions were in themselves aspects of a recognized social role.

This does not mean that on a more immediate level, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's presence in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, his daring actions, and his sometimes biting criticism that exposed the weakest point in the legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's rule did not also pose risks and challenges to the rule, especially since Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's "immunity" prevented al-Ghawrī from punishing him if he overstepped social boundaries. In granting considerable leeway to his jester, al-Ghawrī played a risky game which he emerged from, at least in the case of the debate about the calipahte, with scratches and bruises, especially since Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was ultimately not convinced through arguments, but rather removed under threat of violence. Nevertheless, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was also a valuable

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515   Understanding Umm Abū l-Ḥasan as a jester is not without precedent. In a footnote, ʿAzzām referred to Umm Abū l-Ḥasan as "the laughingstock of the *majlis*" (*ḍuḥkat al-majlis*), al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ed. ʿAzzām) 75. Petry, Robing 368, noted the existence of a "comic" (*muḍḥiq*) in al-Ghawrī's entourage.

516   On people being liminal and marginal at the same time, see Turner, *Process* 128.

517   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 133. See also van Gelder, Fools 36.

asset for the sultan's salons, not despite, but because he could say and do things that were out of question for other attendees. Unbound by conventions and concern for his own social status, he could freely induce laughter among the attendees of the salons and thus alleviate tensions in the sultan's court society. By relaxing the atmosphere in al-Ghawrī's salons, he ensured that conflicts between competing members of the court were resolved in a way that did not disrupt the proper function of the court as a group of mutually dependent individuals. Moreover, we should not underestimate the significance of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's role as an entertainer who amused the sultan and his intimates with his jokes. After all, Ibn Iyās noted that the sultan used these sessions for "jesting (*maẓḥ*) and merrymaking (*mujūn*)."[518]

Furthermore, his liminal status meant that Umm Abū l-Ḥasan held a unique communicative position and was the only *majālis* attendee who could openly criticize the sultan on such particularly sensitive issues as the legitimacy of his rule and his relationship with the ʿAbbasid caliph. If other members of the salons had voiced their dissent with the sultan on such points, they would have risked an immediate fall from grace, and might have severely damaged the sultan's reputation, given that their criticism might be taken seriously by others. However, such criticism from a figure such as Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was far less dangerous, as the audience could always dismiss his critical statements as a fool's ramblings, as al-Sharīf indeed did. For the sultan, such statements from Umm Abū l-Ḥasan were a very rare opportunity by which to receive unfiltered and frank feedback on his rule. In a way, his jester was the only person of his court whom al-Ghawrī could be certain was absolutely honest in his communication with him, particularly with regard to the more sensitive aspects of his position. If he wanted to know what people really thought and said, beyond the flattery about his sultanate and its legitimacy, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was the person al-Ghawrī had to turn to.

Finally, by including a jester in the tradition of the ʿAbbasid *mukhannathūn* in his circle, al-Ghawrī took another opportunity to establish a link with what, in his time, was considered a bygone glorious period of Islamicate history. As seen above, our main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* constitute in themselves conscious recourses to ʿAbbasid literary culture.[519] In a similar vein, the regular presence of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan in the sultan's *majālis* is an indicator that the accounts of these events, and the *majālis* sessions themselves took inspiration from the cultural life of the ʿAbbasid caliphal court of Baghdad.[520]

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518   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.
519   Cf. section 3.1.4 above.
520   This is not to say that al-Ghawrī was the only Mamluk ruler with a jester, as, e.g., al-

Taken together, we see that despite their marginal status, people on the periphery of the main body of participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* such as the musicians, recruits, servants, and jesters had a significant influence on the shape of these courtly events. They prepared them behind the scenes, provided entertainment, gave al-Ghawrī opportunities to present himself as a caring and pious ruler, established connections with the court culture of other periods and regions, stabilized the social order, and even provided the sultan with open and unfiltered feedback on his rule. Studying the status and actions of these people is therefore instrumental in gaining a clearer picture of the sultan's salons and the character of the late Mamluk court at large.

4.2   The Topics of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*

According to our three main sources, during their meetings the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* primarily engaged in the study and discussion of scholarly topics. Although there is evidence that other activities such as the enjoyment of music and food played a role as well, there can be no doubt that conceptual-discursive communication about learned topics constituted an essential element of the sultan's salons. The following sections focus on these communicative acts and seek to answer three questions: What was communicated during the scholarly discussions of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*? How was it communicated? Why was it communicated?

For reasons of clarity of presentation and analytical depth, in the following sections, the questions that the participants in the *majālis* engaged with are grouped into categories and assigned to specific fields of knowledge (*ʿulūm*).[521] In doing so, we rely on the testimony of our primary sources which often, though not always, use key words—such as *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis), *ṭibb* (medicine), or *tārīkh* (history)—to make clear to which fields of knowledge a certain question belongs. By adhering to these emic categories as much as possible, the present study takes the scholarly categories of its sources and the

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Malik al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 825–41/1422–38), al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl b. Qalāwūn (r. 689–93/1290–3), and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn during his third reign (709–41/1310–41) employed jesters (*muḍḥikūn*), cf. Moreh, *Theatre* 70–1; Guo, *Performing Arts* 47–50, 55–6. It is difficult to assess whether or not these people stood in the tradition of the ʿAbbasid *mukhannathūn*.

521   On *ʿilm* (knowledge) and its plural *ʿulūm* (fields of knowledge) as used in the present study, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge*.
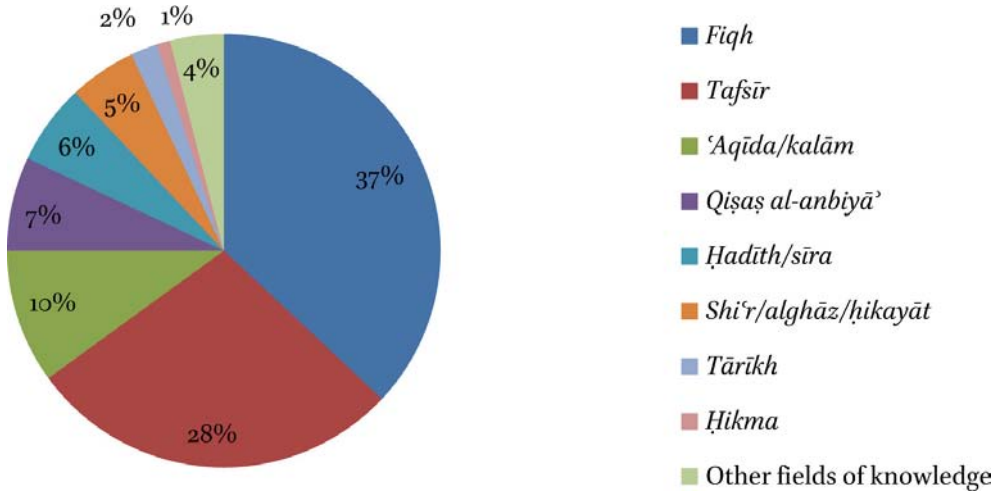
FIGURE 4.1 Shares of fields of knowledge in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (N = 645)

majālis participants seriously and seeks to understand their learned activities in their cultural context.

Our sources do not always clearly indicate which field of knowledge certain questions belong to. In such instances, contextual information and comparisons with similar cases form the basis of our categorization. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that in several cases, it would have been possible to subsume a given question under a different category equally well. Hence, the following quantitative data should be understood only as indicating orders of magnitude, and not precise numbers.[522]

To gain an overview about the relative importance accorded to each field of knowledge in our main sources, the percentage shares for all pertinent fields have been computed, using textual items—usually pairs of questions and answers—as the basic unit of the calculation. The above graph (fig. 4.1) illustrates the relative frequency of discussion topics from the pertinent fields of knowledge in the main part (excluding the introductory passages) of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.[523]

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522   The present study gives only commercially rounded percentages and not precise numbers for each field, as the latter might be misunderstood as indicating what is, in reality, an unattainable level of accuracy.

523   Here and in the following graphs, the fields of knowledge that are represented individually are those that make up more than 1 percent of the contents of at least one of the texts.
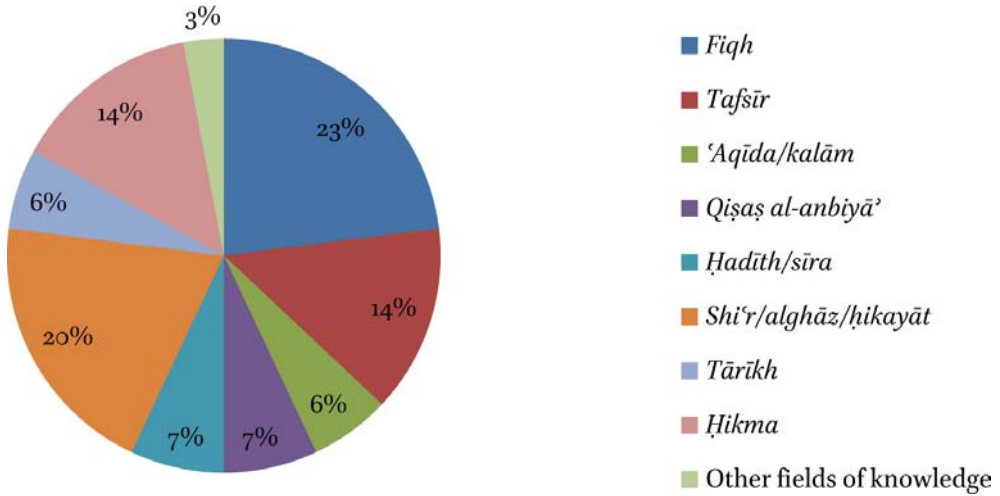
FIGURE 4.2 Shares of fields of knowledge in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (1) (N = 696)

According to the computed data, *fiqh* (jurisprudence) is clearly the dominant field of knowledge in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, with more than one-third of its contents falling into this category. *Tafsīr* is a close second, making up more than one-quarter of all discussion topics. Thereafter follow three fields: (1) *ʿaqīda* (creed) and *kalām* (rational theology), (2) *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets before Muḥammad), and (3) *ḥadīth* and *sīra* (prophetic traditions and accounts of the Prophet Muḥammad's life). These appear in similar orders of magnitude, together making up slightly less than one-quarter of the contents. *Shiʿr* (poetry), *alghāz* (riddles), and *ḥikayāt* (prose stories) combined account for another 5 percent, while questions from *tārīkh* (history) and *ḥikma* (philosophy and wisdom literature) constitute only small fractions. Miscellaneous fields of knowledge, including various natural sciences, medicine, and linguistics add up to a 4 percent share.[524]

Figure 4.2, the first graph for the main part of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, looks notably different from figure 4.1, the graph pertaining to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. While *fiqh* is still the dominant field of knowledge, it makes up less than one-fourth of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. *Shiʿr*, *alghāz*, and *ḥikayāt* take second place, relegating *tafsīr* to third place, which it shares with *ḥikma*. The percentages for the other fields are largely comparable to those in the preceding graph.

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524   See the following sections for a detailed discussion of these categories.
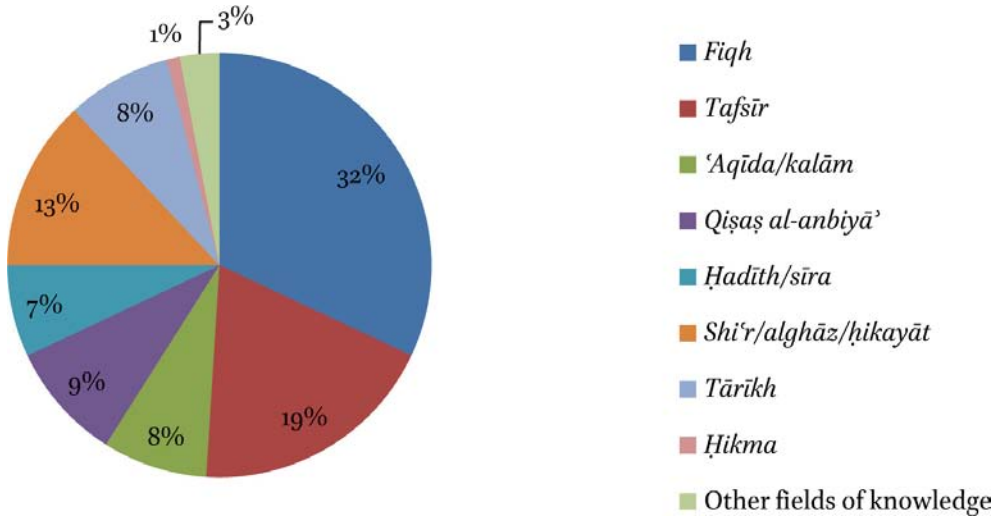
FIGURE 4.3 Shares of fields of knowledge in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* (2) (N = 505)

In graph 4.2 the comparatively high values for the two categories of *ḥikma* on the one hand and *shiʿr, alghāz*, and *ḥikayāt* on the other hand can be explained by the fact that, at the end of almost every subsection on a particular *majlis*, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* includes two concluding passages introduced as "what is fitting" (*al-munāsib*) and "final remark" (*al-khātima*). Most of these passages consist of wise aphorisms or short anecdotes and thus fall under the two categories just mentioned. As discussed above, the author of our text apparently understood these sections not as part of his accounts of the *majālis* proper, but rather added them, in a later step, to the material he had gathered.[525] Hence, we should not consider these concluding passages part of what the author presents as what was said and done during the *majālis*.

A second statistic of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, excluding the *munāsib* and *khātima* sections, resembles that of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* much more closely, as it immediately apparent when figure 4.3 is compared to figure 4.1. As in *al-Kawkab al-durrī, fiqh* is in this second statistic the clearly predominant field; textual units dealing with this topic make up almost one-third of the entire text. Moreover, as in *al-Kawkab al-durrī, tafsīr* now holds second place. Other fields of knowledge dealing with religious topics, such as (1) *ʿaqīda* and *kalām*, (2) *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, and (3) *ḥadīth* and *sīra* are between 7 and 9 percent, which resemble their respective shares in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. Once the *mu-*

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525   Cf. section 3.1.1.2 above.
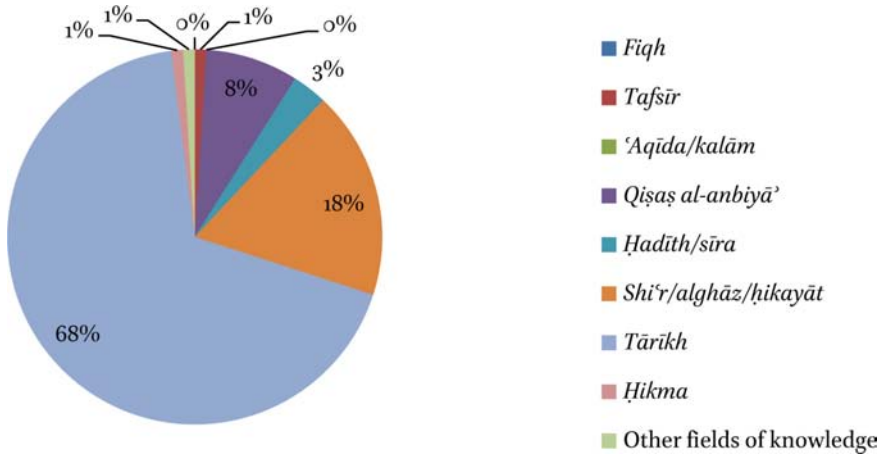
FIGURE 4.4 Shares of fields of knowledge in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* (N = 602)

nāsib and *khātima* sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are excluded from the calculation, textual units pertaining to *ḥikma* make up only a tiny fraction, that is, 1 percent, in both works.

Nevertheless, there are clear differences between the two graphs, especially with regard to the fields of *tārīkh* and *shiʿr*, *alghāz*, and *ḥikayāt*, which play a much more pronounced role in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* than they do in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. The causes for these differences are not entirely clear. Given that both texts are literary accounts of the *majālis*, these differences might be explained by their authors' choices as to what to include in their texts. Yet, it is also possible that they can be traced back to changes in the main fields of interest pursued by the *majālis* attendees. *Tārīkh* and *shiʿr*, *alghāz*, and *ḥikayāt* might have been given more attention during the comparatively early discussions in the sultan's salons on which *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is based than during later sessions dealt with in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. At any rate, the data about the relevance of the various fields of knowledge in the sultan's *majālis* from the two texts are largely similar, but clearly are not entirely identical. This reaffirms that these are two independent sources based on the same series of events.

The statistical analysis of the fields of knowledge dealt with in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* yields an entirely different picture, as is clear from graph 4.4. History (*tārīkh*) is clearly predominant, making up more than two-thirds of the text. To this, one should add the shares of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, and *ḥadīth* and *sīra*, given that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* understood passages on these topics as parts of his engagement with history. Thus, historical sections in the wider sense make up almost 80 percent of the text. Among the other fields

of knowledge, *shiʿr*, *alghāz*, and *ḥikayāt* rank in second place with 18 percent, and the remaining fields are all 1 percent or less.

The reasons for these data are obvious: at least in the parts available to us, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is primarily a book of history. Hence, it is not surprising that historical topics make up the bulk of its contents. Moreover, the work includes significant portions with a primarily literary character which are, at times, only loosely connected to the historical narrative, as discussed above.[526] Hence, the relative frequencies with which topics appear in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are clearly the result of the author's choices and do not allow us to draw conclusions about their relative importance in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.

The following sections discuss each of the fields of knowledge identified as playing a role in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Taking the values from the statistical analyses of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*[527] and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* as a guideline, these sections begin with the most frequently addressed field of knowledge and then proceed to the less prominent fields.

4.2.1 *Jurisprudence*

Discussions dealing with topics of *fiqh*, that is, Islamic jurisprudence, clearly predominate in both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, making up about one-third of each of the works. Thus it appears that *fiqh* questions were at the center of many debates in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as is also suggested by the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* which mentions *fiqh* as one of the four fields of knowledge in which the sultan was particularly interested.[528]

Numerous of the legal problems addressed in the sultan's salons were of direct relevance to members of the Mamluk ruling elite, as is shown in the examples of *fiqh* discussions about chess and oaths analyzed in what follows. These two examples also elucidate the diverse ways in which the members of the sultan's circle addressed legal topics.

The game of chess, originally an Indian invention,[529] reached the Arabic-speaking lands around the beginning of the Islamic period.[530] Persian and Arabic literature presents numerous Islamicate rulers, including Umayyad and

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526   Cf. section 3.1.3.2 above.

527   All subsequent references to percentages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* refer to those given in fig. 4.3.

528   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1993.

529   For Islamicate narratives on the invention of chess, see Murray, *History* 207–19; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* ii, 142; Hasson, *Amusements* 99–100; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 88–103; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* ii, 144.

530   Rosenthal, Shaṭrandj 366. See also Wieber, *Schachspiel* 48–75.

ʿAbbasid caliphs, Maḥmūd of Ghazna, Tīmūr Lang, and the Timurid Ḥusayn Bāyqarā as playing chess.[531] From the early Islamic period onward, chess was deemed fitting for rulers because it trained the mind for war; thus, it became an important element of Islamicate courtly cultures of leisure.[532] Since chess was also popular in the Mamluk period,[533] especially among members of the military elite,[534] it is hardly surprising that al-Ghawrī also played this game.[535] One of the sultan's Turkish poems about divine love features numerous chess metaphors.[536] Its beginning reads:

> The boat has fallen into the whirlpool of the Ocean of Love.
> The way to getting saved became closed.
> The attributes of Your Beauty—exalted is its state!—
> Left no splendor for the moon and the sun.
> Advance your horse; let the elephant [= bishop]
> Show your rook so that the pawn may be checkmated.[537]

One of the mirrors-for-princes written for al-Ghawrī, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, likewise addresses the game and recommends that rulers should not exhaust themselves playing it, but rather allocate a fixed part of their day to such recreational activities.[538]

In the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, chess appears several times. Highlighting the close link between the game and rulership and courtly behavior, both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* include the sultan relating the same anecdote—though in markedly different words—about Maḥmūd of Ghazna as a chess player: While Maḥmūd played chess with his intimate Ayas, he used to praise Ayas in the highest terms, in order to train himself in *adab*.[539] Moreover, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* also states that al-

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531   Murray, *History* 193, 195–8, 202, 204–6. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* ii, 143; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 157; (ed. ʿAzzām) 59–60; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, 28ʳ; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 60–1; Somogyi, Chess 102.

532   Hasson, *Amusements* 101, 133. See also Rosenthal, *Gambling* 5; Murray, *History* 221–3.

533   Schallenbergh, Chess 527. See also Murray, *History* 204.

534   Ayalon, Notes 57. See also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 672.

535   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 185. See also Petry, *Protectors* 140.

536   On poems using chess metaphors, see Rosenthal, *Gambling* 127; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 122–37; Schallenbergh, Chess 527–8.

537   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 131–2. See Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 87 for the Ottoman Turkish text.

538   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 12ᵛ–13ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

539   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 157; (ed. ʿAzzām) 59–60; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, 28ʳ.

Ghawrī recounted a story about Tīmūr playing chess, underlining again that the game was deemed suitable for rulers.[540]

In the present context, the debate about the permissibility of chess narrated in similar forms in both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is more relevant. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the account of the discussion reads:

> **First question:** Our lord the sultan asked the Ḥanafī chief judge about chess (*shaṭranj*).
>
> **Answer:** The judge said: "It is permissible (*mubāḥ*) according to the Shāfiʿīs under three conditions. First, that it is played without stakes (sg. *rahn*); second, that the ritual prayer is not missed because of it; and third, that it does not exceed three matches [in a row]."[541]

The parallel passage in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is more detailed:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan, said, "Is the playing of chess permissible (*mubāḥ*) or not?"
>
> **Answer:** "It has been reported that Abū Hurayra, ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Saʿīd [b.] al-Musayyab [*sic*], Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd, and Ibrāhīm b. Ṭalḥa used to play chess. Moreover, chess entails military planning (*tadbīr al-ḥurūb*) and playing [it] resembles fighting. Furthermore, [there is] no authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) prohibition on playing it established on the authority of the Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation.
>
> When occupation with it keeps one from the ritual prayer or other acts of worship, then it is forbidden (*ḥarām*). Hence, chess is not in itself forbidden. If one does not continue doing it persistently and regularly [but still does it often], then it is reprehensible (*makrūh*). If one continues playing it persistently and regularly, then it becomes a minor sin (*ṣaghīra*), according to what al-Damīrī said."[542]

These two accounts have common features, but also clear differences. In both, the sultan begins the debate. However, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, his question is not explicitly stated; rather, the text says only that the ruler inquired about chess. By contrast, in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, al-Ghawrī uses precise legal terminology when he asks whether the game is permissible or neutral, that

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540 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 155–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 58.
541 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 154; (ed. ʿAzzām) 57–8.
542 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 108; (ed. ʿAzzām) 43.

is, whether it belongs to the actions for which a believer will receive neither reward nor punishment.

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya clearly identifies the Ḥanafī chief judge, that is, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna as the addressee of the question. The latter then gives a short and quite straightforward reply: According to the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*, playing chess is permissible provided three stipulations are met: no money or other material stakes are involved, playing the game must not cause one to neglect one's prayers, and the number of games must be limited to three. Why Ibn al-Shiḥna, as a Ḥanafī, replied to the sultan's question according to a Shāfiʿī point of view is an important question that we address further below.

The anonymous reply narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is more complicated. It consists of two parts. First, the text gives three arguments why chess should be viewed as neutral, that is, permissible: (1) Famous Companions of the Prophet and followers (*tābiʿūn*) engaged in the game. This indicates that these exemplary early Muslims saw nothing problematic in it. (2) Chess involves valuable training, as it is an exercise in military planning. (3) There is no authentic *ḥadīth* transmitted from the Prophet Muḥammad which clearly forbids the game. Although the text does not say it explicitly, these arguments show that chess could be considered permissible, as the sultan suggested in his question.

Yet, chess is not always permissible. If one fails to fulfill one's religious duties because of the game, then playing it becomes strictly forbidden, although, as the text points out, the quality that makes it forbidden rests not in the game itself, but in the behavior it can lead to. The legal status of the game is primarily dependent on its players' behavior, as is also apparent from the fact that if one plays it often, it becomes reprehensible. This, at least, was the position of a certain al-Damīrī.

The question of the permissibility of chess has vexed Muslim scholars for centuries and was a debated issue during Mamluk times, as is illustrated by a *fatwā* on the topic from the pen of the noted Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328).[543] In this debate, Q 5:92 constituted one of the most important source texts: "You who believe, intoxicants and gambling (*maysir*), idols (*anṣāb*), and [divining with] arrows are repugnant acts—Satan's doing—shun them so that you may prosper."[544] In this verse, the prohibitions of both "gambling" (*maysir*)[545] and "idols" (*anṣāb*) were understood as relevant with

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543   Schallenbergh, Chess 529.
544   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.
545   On *maysir*, see Rosenthal, *Gambling, passim*.

regard to chess. The ban on idols was usually interpreted as forbidding any figures of animate beings, hence, chess sets were not allowed to include figures in the shape of humans or animals.[546] As for the prohibition of *maysir*, there was dispute about whether chess was included in this term. Ibn Taymiyya argued that chess only constituted gambling if stakes were involved, and many other scholars agreed with him that playing for money was clearly forbidden.[547]

The question regarding whether chess without stakes was permitted could not be decided with reference to the Quranic text only. Hence, Muslim jurists turned to the corpus of prophetic traditions, which included numerous mentions of the Prophet banning the game. The majority of jurists, however, did not consider these explicit traditions authentic.[548] However, other authentic traditions deemed relevant to the question present the Prophet as forbidding all games of chance, allowing as legitimate pastimes only military exercises, namely archery and horseback riding, as well as spending time with one's womenfolk.[549]

Based on this evidence, the four Sunni *madhhab*s of the Mamluk period came to diverging conclusions on the permissibility of chess. According to most Ḥanafīs, playing the game was forbidden (*ḥarām*) when stakes were involved, and reprehensible (*makrūh*) when pursued for amusement only, as it did not count among the pastimes allowed by the Prophet Muḥammad. Mālikīs and Ḥanbalīs usually considered chess *ḥarām* under all circumstances.[550]

Only the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* was, at least according to some of its adherents, willing to consider the game permissible under certain circumstances, as it could be understood as falling within the Prophet's endorsement of pastimes constituting military training. Al-Shāfiʿī is reported to have played chess, and Shāfiʿī works often include references, like *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, to early Muslims who engaged in the game. Nevertheless, even to Shāfiʿīs, certain requirements must be fulfilled to render the playing of chess *mubāḥ*: Stakes are forbidden, religious obligations must not be neglected, and the game must not lead to

546   Murray, *History* 188. See also Rosenthal, *Gambling* 88; Rosenthal, S̲h̲aṭrandj 366; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 137–8. For chess figures from the Islamicate world, see, e.g., Hasson, *Amusements* 30–2, 97–8, 100–1; Gunter, Chess, *passim*.

547   Murray, *History* 188; Schallenbergh, Chess 530. See also Rosenthal, *Gambling* 38, 40, 68–9, 85; and on Ibn Taymiyya's opinion in general, see Schallenbergh, Chess 529–37.

548   Murray, *History* 188–9. See also Wieber, *Schachspiel* 51–5; Rosenthal, S̲h̲aṭrandj 367.

549   Murray, *History* 188–9; Schallenbergh, Chess 536. For a text from al-Ghawrī's court likening the playing of chess to the commanding of troops, see Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 198–201.

550   Murray, *History* 189. See also Rosenthal, *Gambling* 87, 89–90, 93; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 138–42. On differing opinions on chess in one *madhhab*, see Schallenbergh, Chess 528.

indecent behavior.[551] These conditions closely resemble those listed in Ibn al-Shiḥna's reply in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.

We see that in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* the replies to the sultan's question both follow a Shāfiʿī line of reasoning. The reference to a certain al-Damīrī at the end of the reply in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* points in the same direction. This authority is Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405), a Shāfiʿī scholar best known today for his *Kitāb Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* (Book of the lives of animals), a zoological reference work, including comprehensive biological, philological, medical, and legal information on numerous animal species, alongside excursuses into other topics.[552]

In one of these excursuses, al-Damīrī addresses the question of the permissibility of chess. He notes that according to Mālikīs, Ḥanafīs, and Ḥanbalīs, the playing of the game is *ḥarām*, while in the Shāfiʿī school, scholars vary in their judgments, declaring it either *ḥarām, makrūh*, or *mubāḥ*. Al-Damīrī opts to consider it *makrūh*, but uses most of his excursus to provide arguments in favor of chess, probably in an effort to defend his more lenient opinion against the stricter view of the other *madhhab*s. Among al-Damīrī's arguments, we find references to pious early Muslims who played chess, to the value of the game as military training, and to the fact that there is no authentic *ḥadīth* that forbids the playing of the game. Moreover, al-Damīrī explains that the permissibility of chess is tied to the frequency with which it is played and that engaging in the game becomes *ḥarām* if it prevents one from performing one's ritual prayers.[553] These arguments are not new to us, as they also appear in the same form and order in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. A comparison of the texts shows that the reply in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is clearly based on *Kitāb Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*; sometimes the text is quoted verbatim, sometimes it is abbreviated and slightly reformulated. Moreover, we know that there was a copy of the work in the library of Sultan Qāytbāy.[554]

Although it is impossible to know with certainty whether al-Damīrī's *Kitāb Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* was quoted in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, several observations suggest that a discussion about the permissibility of chess took place in the salons

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551   Murray, *History* 190. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* ii, 143; Rosenthal, *Gambling* 87, 90; Schallenbergh, Chess 529. On whether the first Muslim generations played chess, see Rosenthal, *Gambling* 87–9, 150; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 57–60. For critical Shāfiʿī voices, see Rosenthal, *Gambling* 89, 93; Wieber, *Schachspiel* 141–2.

552   Kopf, al-Damīrī 107–8. On *Kitāb Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, see also Somogyi, Index; van Berkel, Opening 366–7.

553   Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* ii, 144–5. On al-Damīrī's excursus, see also Somogyi, Chess.

554   MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3451 [non vidi]. See Arberry, *Handlist* ii, 86.

and that in broad lines, it followed the course narrated in our sources. First, we have two accounts about such a discussion in two sources; these clearly recount the debate independently from one another, given the numerous differences in detail. Moreover, we know that al-Ghawrī himself played chess. Through this practice and by making its permissibility a point of discussion in his circle, al-Ghawrī linked his court to that of rulers such as the glorious bygone ʿAbbasids of Baghdad or Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who were known for their indulgence in chess. In this context, it is fitting that our sources credit al-Ghawrī with telling stories about earlier famous chess-playing rulers. Furthermore, by inquiring about the legality of chess, al-Ghawrī also presented himself as a particularly pious and learned ruler who wanted to ensure that his actions were in accord with Islamic law and so he had a controversial question of religious learning debated in his *majlis*.

The debate about the permissibility of chess is also relevant for what it tells us about the legal world of the Mamluk period. According to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Ghawrī, as a Ḥanafī, addressed his question about this topic to the chief judge of his *madhhab*, that is, his favorite ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna. The latter, however, replied to the sultan's question not from a Ḥanafī, but from a Shāfiʿī perspective. The reason for Ibn al-Shiḥna's maneuver is quite obvious: Probably aware of the fact that al-Ghawrī liked to play chess, he had to find a way to give his legal consent to the sultan's activities without violating the law. The only way to do this was to adopt a Shāfiʿī position, as this allowed Ibn al-Shiḥna to issue an, albeit qualified, approval of chess. That Ibn al-Shiḥna decided to follow the teachings of a rival school under these circumstances indicates that he was willing and able to handle the law in a flexible manner, in order to meet the expectations of his patron who relied on Ibn al-Shiḥna's skills in navigating the shoals of the law. We can understand the outcome of the discussion about the permissibility of chess as a conscious attempt to use a recognized form of legal plurality in Sunni Islam to arrive at a ruling that suited the needs of the Mamluk ruling elite. It thus formed part of a larger project of seeking legal flexibility within the limits of the established legal cosmos of late middle Sunni Islam.

There are other examples in which members of the Mamluk ruling elite exploited the differences of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) in and between the schools of law to sanction their behavior.[555] As Robert Irwin showed, Mamluk military men for instance adopted a teaching of the Shāfiʿī school that allowed them to consume horse meat, a diet prohibited according to the view of most

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555   On the concept of *ikhtilāf* in tenth-/sixteenth-century Egypt, see Pagani, Meaning.

Ḥanafīs.[556] Similarly, Yossef Rapoport noted that "when members of the military elite—which was predominantly Ḥanafī—wished to buy or sell endowments, they approached a Ḥanbalī *qāḍī*, the only one authorized to perform such sales."[557]

These observations should not be interpreted as suggesting that Mamluk military men did not usually follow the Ḥanafī *madhhab* of law. In fact, the Mamluk military elite, especially during the later part of its rule, took great pains to sponsor its favorite *madhhab* and endow institutions serving the ritual and educational needs of its followers.[558] This degree of support led members of other schools of law to protest against what they considered inappropriate favoritism.[559]

Yet, the Mamluk elite did not make the Ḥanafī *madhhab* the official *madhhab* of the realm as the Ottomans did.[560] Rather, at a very early point of their rule, in 663/1256, the Mamluks established a system that recognized all four schools of law, granted them almost equal status, and appointed four largely independent chief judges to head them. Moreover, they recognized the head of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* as the highest-ranking among the four chief judges and gave him precedence in both ceremonial matters and in more mundane questions such as the supervision of religious endowments and the administration of the property of orphans.[561] This legal system was a peculiar feature of the Mamluk Sultanate and attracted the attention of foreign visitors, as Leo Africanus' description shows.[562]

This course of action did not find universal approval among Mamluk Ḥanafī scholars, and we know of at least one Mamluk text by a Ḥanafī author who tried to persuade the military rulers that they would profit from granting a larger degree of authority to the Ḥanafīs.[563] The Mamluks, however, had no

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556   Irwin, Eating 2–3. On the consumption of horse meat, see also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 114, 176–7; Africanus, *History* iii, 884–5; Lewicka, *Food* 82, 179–80.

557   Rapoport, Diversity 222.

558   Fernandes, Politics 89–98. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 10; Levanoni, Supplementary Source 159, 170–5.

559   Fernandes, Politics 88–9. See also Winter, *Society* 220.

560   On the Ḥanafī *madhhab* as the official Ottoman school of law, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 214, 216–7; Berger, Interpretations 694; Peters, Hanafism; Burak, Formation; Burak, *Formation*.

561   Rapoport, Diversity 210 (on the course of events); Fernandes, Politics 89 (for the prerogatives of the Shāfiʿī judge). See also Winter, ʿUlamāʾ 34; Little, Religion 174; Rapoport, Diversity 217, 227; Berkey, Policy 12–4; Jackson, Primacy; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 405; and the numerous earlier studies referenced in Rapoport, Diversity 210–2.

562   Africanus, *History* iii, 885–6.

563   Winter, ʿUlamāʾ 34. See also Tezcan, Hanafism; Winter, Competition; Hassan, *Longing* 121–3.

interest in dissolving the existing systems and elevating the Ḥanafī chief judge at his colleagues' expense. As Rapoport suggested, having four chief judges of almost equal standing was extremely attractive to the Mamluk rulers: In the late middle period, Sunni scholars usually agreed that in their official capacities judges had to exercise *taqlīd*,[564] that is, uphold the rulings of earlier authorities that were accepted in their school of law. Hence, a *qāḍī* could not apply his own interpretation of the law at will, but was obliged to follow the authoritative standards in his *madhhab*. This meant that, to a certain degree, a *qāḍī*'s ruling in any given case was predictable.[565]

Yet, the predictably of a judge's ruling came at a price: While earlier Muslim jurists had a certain flexibility in interpreting the law as circumstances required, their colleagues during the Mamluk period largely lacked this adaptability, as they had to follow the authoritative rulings of their *madhhab*. This seriously curtailed the legal flexibility of the Mamluk governing system as a whole and limited the possibility of adjusting the law to changing circumstances.[566]

When the rulings of a judge of a particular *madhhab* were more or less foreseeable, the existence of four recognized schools of law meant that litigants could ensure that they would receive a verdict that suited their needs by choosing the *qāḍī* that would hear their case. Thus, Ḥanbalī judges were asked to confirm types of contracts or authorize marriages that *qāḍī*s of other *madhhab*s could not agree to. Ḥanafī judges were requested to rule for the imprisonment of debtors claiming to be bankrupt, as the other *madhhab*s advocated a more lenient view regarding such people; Mālikī *qāḍī*s were approached with cases that required reliance on documentary evidence that was not acceptable to other judges, or could be asked to see to the prosecution of heretics, as their school of law gave such people no chance to repent and thus ensured a swift punishment. Shāfiʿī judges were particularly attractive in cases in which only one of the usually required two witnesses was available, as they alone could accept the testimony of a single witness if backed by oath.[567]

Hence, the existence of four recognized schools brought with it a certain amount of flexibility rooted in the differences of opinion between these *madh-*

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564 On this concept, see, e.g., Hallaq, *Authority* 86–8; Jackson, Kramer 29, 31–3.

565 Rapoport, Diversity 213–7. See also Berkey, Policy 14; Müller, Recht 252; Müller, Law 267–9; Peters, Hanafism 149–51; Al-Azem, Handbook; Al-Azem, *Rule-Formulation, passim*; Hallaq, *Authority* 126–65.

566 Rapoport, Diversity 217.

567 Rapoport, Diversity 217–21. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xi, 95–6, provides an overview of the "specialities" of each school.

*hab*s and historical evidence suggests that the populace of the Mamluk realm and its elite were skilled at using the opportunities this system offered.[568] Yet, in order to fully exploit the differences between the schools, one first had to know about them. For jurists, the study of these doctrinal distinctions was part of their training[569] and was reenacted in debates between members of different schools.[570] While we do not know how the common people kept themselves informed about the available legal choices, our sources on al-Ghawrī offer a glimpse into how members of the ruling elite, including the sultan, obtained the legal knowledge they needed to benefit from the flexibility of the juridical system. In our *majālis* sources, the topic of the differences (*ikhtilāf*) between the schools of law and the question of how a *qāḍī* from a given *madhhab* would rule in a specific situation is a recurring subject of inquiry. The issues discussed include, for example, the law of fasting,[571] the correct performance of prayers and the ritual ablutions,[572] the duties during the pilgrimage,[573] the punishment of people who did not their religious obligations,[574] the valid forms of oaths and their fulfillment,[575] the administration of the *zakāt*,[576] a judge's leeway in decision making,[577] the punishment for people consuming wine,[578] the position of the sultan vis-à-vis other officials in religious contexts,[579] divorce law,[580] the manumission of slaves,[581] the legal status of adulterers and their children,[582] the retrieval of stolen property,[583] the prosecution of murderers,[584] the requirements for valid conversion to Islam,[585] and the payment of blood

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568   Rapoport, Diversity 221–6.

569   Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 86. See also Hallaq, *Authority* 125. For important literature on this topic used during the late Mamluk period, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473.

570   Africanus, *History* iii, 886. See also Zadeh, *Vernacular* 106.

571   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 11, 107; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11.

572   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 60, 62, 90–1, 103, 106, 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 105–6; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 8, 10–1, 65, 80–1, 87–8, 165–7, 220, 230–1, 237, 265–6, 289, 296, 302–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 8–9.

573   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 38; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 232.

574   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 159.

575   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 61–2; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 16.

576   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 217; (ed. ʿAzzām) 98.

577   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 303; (ed. ʿAzzām) 88.

578   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 87.

579   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 220; (ed. ʿAzzām) 100.

580   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 224–5.

581   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 235; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 192.

582   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 54–5.

583   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 298–9.

584   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 52–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 25.

585   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 220–1.

money.[586] At least some of these topics were of personal relevance to members of the ruling Mamluk elite and the sultan, who was, at least in theory, obliged to adhere to one of the established schools of law when he dispensed justice.[587] Usually, the Ḥanafī and the Shāfiʿī opinions on a given legal situation were given the most attention in the *majālis* accounts, as is to be expected given that the majority of the Mamluk population was Shāfiʿī, while the military elite usually followed the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.[588] Yet, the other two schools received attention as well. This suggests that the legal discussions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* can be understood in part as exercises in identifying the school of law one might choose to follow in a specific situation. The fact that the discussions in question often involved the Mamluk sultan as well as the chief judges, especially of the Ḥanafī and the Shāfiʿī schools, indicates that al-Ghawrī used his salons to learn more about the differences between the *madhhab*s. As in the discussion of the permissibility of chess, neither the chief judges nor the sultan seem to have felt obliged to abide exclusively by the views of their own school of law in these debates. Thus, we can interpret the legal discussions in al-Ghawrī's salons as reflections of the legal reality of the late Mamluk period, during which knowledge about the differences of opinion between the *madhhab*s was a valuable asset for all parties involved. Moreover, our sources show that the different legal identities and allegiances that became apparent in the *majālis* were seen to enrich these discussions and foster their scholarly goals.

The above-mentioned topic concerning valid forms of oaths and their fulfillment appears so frequently in the *majālis* accounts that it deserves separate treatment here. Both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* include unusually long passages dealing exclusively with this *fiqh* topic. The following example is from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, but four of its question-and-answer pairs also appear in similar form in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "A person swears (*yaḥlifu*) that he will not enter a house (*dār*) and then enters either a mosque or the Kaʿba or a synagogue or a church: Has [this person] broken his oath (*yaḥnathu*)[589] or not?"

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586   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 75; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 178–9.

587   Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 59.

588   For observations suggesting that, during the middle period, Shāfiʿīs and Ḥanafīs viewed each other as the most important legal "other," see Calder, *Jurisprudence* 104, 109, 145.

589   On the root *ḥ-n-th* and its meanings, see Calder, Ḥinth.

Answer: "He has not broken his oath, because a house is built for living and these [aforementioned] places have not been built for this [aim] according to the statement of the author of *al-Hidāya*."[590]

Question: "Someone swears that he will not enter a house (*dār*) and then enters a *dihlīz* (vestibule, anteroom).[591] Has he broken his oath or not?"

Answer: "This question is in need of particularization, for if he entered a *dihlīz* that is roofed and can be closed with a door, then he has broken his oath and if not, then not."[592]

Question: "Someone swears that he will not enter a house (*dār*) and then enters a house that is in ruins. Has he broken his oath or not?"

Answer: "He has not broken his oath, in contrast to [the case in which] he has sworn that he will not enter this [specific] house, it then fell into ruins and he entered it after it was torn down and became rubble. Then, he has broken his oath."[593]

Question: "A human being swears that he will not enter this [specific] house, and then it fell into ruins. Thereafter, it was rebuilt and he entered it. Did he break his oath or not?"

Answer: "He broke his oath, because the designation (*ism*) of [this specific house] remains after it is torn down."

Question: His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Someone swears that he will not enter this [specific] house, and then it fell into ruins. Thereafter, a bath (*ḥammām*) or a garden (*bustān*) was built [in its place] and he entered it. Did he break his oath or not?"

Answer: "He did not break his oath according to what is said in *al-Hidāya*."

Question: "Someone swears that he will not enter this [specific] house and then stands on its roof. Did he break his oath or not?"

Answer: "He broke his oath because the roof belongs to the house. The precedence is that the one who devotes himself zealously to the service of God in a mosque (*muʿtakif*) does not violate his devotion by climbing on the roof of the mosque."[594]

Question: His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Someone swears that he will not enter this [specific] house while he is in [this] house. Does he break his oath by sitting down in it or not?"

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590 Parallel passage in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 234.
591 For more detail on this term, see Fuess, Between 150–3.
592 Parallel passage in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 234.
593 Parallel passage in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 238.
594 Parallel passage in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 238.

> **Answer:** "He does not break his oath by sitting down in it according to the statement of the author of *al-Hidāya*."[595]

The passage just given covers about one and one-half manuscript pages in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and is one of the longest closely connected series of questions and answers in the whole work. But why is it there at all? And, on what sources is it based?

Various types of oaths and vows play an important role in various fields of Islamic law.[596] Most, if not all of these types of oaths and vows were already known in the legal system of pre-Islamic Arabia.[597] The *nadhr* was a kind of dedicatory vow that often involved the sacrifice of an animal or fasting and was intended to secure a good outcome of a specific affair.[598] It sometimes resembles the *īlāʾ*, a vow of abstinence sanctioned by Q 2:226–7.[599] Other words that can be translated as "oath" or "vow" have a less specific meaning, such as *yamīn* (lit. "right hand"), which can denote any type of oath between two or more parties,[600] or *qasam*, which also denotes oaths in general, but is used more rarely in sources of the middle period.[601] *Ḥalafa*, the verb usually employed in our *majālis* sources for "swearing an oath," though originally associated with specific legal institutions,[602] came to denote the act of making an oath in the most general sense.[603]

Oaths played important roles in interactions between members of Islamicate societies. They were often sworn in religiously significant places, such as a mosque, or with a Quran in hand.[604] In the world of Mamluk politics, such oaths, supported by objects or pledged in places of special religious significance were one of the few communicative instruments available to parties wishing to affirm mutually binding arrangements.[605] As seen above, al-Ghawrī, his

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595   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 112–4.
596   Cf, e.g., Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 86, 173–4, 265, 286–7, 312, 314–5, 345, 348, 350, 352–3.
597   For an overview of the different types of oaths, vows, and related legal institutions, see Lewinstein, Oaths.
598   Pedersen, Nadhr 846–7.
599   Pedersen, Nadhr 847. See also Hawting, Vow; Gottschalk, *Gelübde* 65–70; Pedersen, Ḳasam 689.
600   Bearman et al., Yamīn 280.
601   Pedersen, Ḳasam 687.
602   Tyan, Ḥilf 388–9.
603   Pedersen, Ḳasam 687.
604   Pedersen, Ḳasam 688. See also Lewinstein, Oaths 571.
605   See Lewinstein, Oaths 571, on oaths in "high politics"; and Irwin, Factions 237; Mazor, *Rise* 95–6, on oaths in Mamluk politics.

*amīr*s, and rank-and-file soldiers regularly relied on oaths to assure each other of their faithfulness.[606]

Late Mamluk sources provide us with detailed information about oaths exchanged between Mamluk political actors.[607] They typically included a conditional clause citing the result of violating the oath. For example, a particular type of oath known to jurists as *al-ḥalf bi-l-ṭalāq* was a widespread means of demonstrating the sincerity of statements in the premodern and modern Islamicate world. In such an oath, the condition was the automatic divorce from one's wife or wives.[608] According to Rapoport, they were "considered as the most solemn form of oath."[609] Given that such oaths were also used to regulate the internal relations of the Mamluk military elite, for example, as part of the *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) sworn to Mamluk rulers,[610] the legal stipulations governing these oaths were a matter of great interest to the ruling circles of the Mamluk realms.[611] To them, doubts regarding the legality of these oaths, which were indeed sometimes voiced, not only concerned theoretical legal questions, but indeed "threatened the established order [...] by implicitly undermining the oaths which the Mamluks themselves had sworn to obey the reigning sultan."[612] Hence, Mamluk rulers were personally interested in ascertaining the legal validity of this "cornerstone of the political order."[613]

Thus, it is noteworthy that the type of oaths known as *al-ḥalf bi-l-ṭalāq* was also a recurring topic in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. The parallel account of the first question-and-answer pair, quoted above from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, appears in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, where it reads:

> **Sixth Question:** "A person swore on [the pain of] divorce (*ḥalaf bi-l-ṭalāq*)[614] that he will not enter a house (*bayt*) and then enters either the Kaʿba or a mosque or a church or a synagogue: Does the divorce come into effect or not?"

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606   See sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2 above. See also Petry, *Protectors* 90; Petry, *Twilight* 134–5, 138, 161, 186–7, 223, 225, 227; Rapoport, *Marriage* 107. On the significance of such oaths for al-Ghawrī's contemporaries, see Ohta, Bindings 221–2.

607   E.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiii, 200–320; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalāʾid*, fols. 58ʳ–67ᵛ.

608   Cf. al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiii, 218; Rapoport, *Marriage* 91–2; Pedersen, Ḳasam 689. See also Pedersen, *Eid* 126–7; Lewinstein, Oaths 571–2; Rapoport, *Marriage* 89–110.

609   Rapoport, *Marriage* 90.

610   Rapoport, *Marriage* 90.

611   Berkey, Policy 16.

612   Berkey, Policy 16. For the case of Ibn Taymiyya, see Rapoport, *Marriage* 96–105.

613   Rapoport, *Marriage* 91.

614   Translation quoted from Rapoport, *Marriage* 89.

Answer: "It [that is, the divorce] does not take place because a house is something that is intended for living and these [aforementioned] localities have not been built for this [aim]."[615]

Thus, there was a clear connection between the oaths that members of the Mamluk military elite swore as part of their political activities and the hypothetical questions on the law of oaths addressed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. This in turn suggests that there might have been real personal interest on the side of the participants in what at first appears to be abstract questions on legal minutiae. In a world of political turmoil in which oaths on pain of divorce were one of the few legal institutions guaranteeing a modicum of trustworthiness, political leaders apparently developed an interest in the legal details governing the fulfillment and violation of such oaths. Moreover, abstract and hypothetical cases such as those appearing in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* must have been considered well-suited for the sultan to learn the finer points of the law, given that very similar cases were used in the advanced training of jurists, too.[616] Hence, it makes sense to interpret the legal discussions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as portrayed in our sources as part of a conscious effort by the sultan to gain a deeper understanding of this field of law that was of practical relevance for the daily reality of Mamluk politics. This is also confirmed by the fact that our sources present the sultan as directly involved in the debates dealing with this field of *fiqh*.[617]

Furthermore, mastering the notoriously complicated field of oath laws was a distinguishing characteristic of an accomplished jurist.[618] Thus, it stands to reason that jurists attending the sultan's *majālis* engaged in discussions about this topic to demonstrate their scholarly competence. This applies especially to discussions about legal devices (sg. *ḥīla*) that could help one to avoid the fulfillment of an oath. Since this was a prominent area of study for scholars who sought to outwit their colleagues,[619] it is fitting that it also appears as a topic of discussion in our *majālis* sources.[620]

Thus, questions about oaths were of interest to *majālis* attendees, both for practical reasons and as a chance to demonstrate their legal erudition. This

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615   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 234. For further debates about this topic, see al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 234 (two more cases), 238 (three cases).

616   Cf., e.g., Calder, Ḥinth 216–8.

617   This stands in opposition to the assumption in Petry, *Protectors* 165, that al-Ghawrī showed little interest in "legal minutiae and scholastic trivia."

618   Pedersen, *Eid* 219.

619   Lewinstein, Oaths 572. See also Pedersen, *Eid* 213–4, 219; Rapoport, *Marriage* 94–6.

620   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 72. See also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 67, 211.

speaks strongly in favor of the assumption that they did in fact debate about this field of legal knowledge, especially since both *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* offer similar accounts of such discussions. Yet, the question remains, based on what kind of material did they pursue their scholarly inquiries into this and other areas of *fiqh*.

Apart from the incorporated cultural capital that attendees of the sultan's *majālis* brought with them, a specific selection of books provided the background of the legal discussions in the sultan's salon. One of these works, known as *al-Hidāya* (The guidance), is repeatedly mentioned in the passage on oaths from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, cited above. Indeed, no other legal work is more often quoted or referred to in our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* than this Ḥanafī *fiqh* text.[621] Its author, Burhān al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. 593/1197) from Marghīnān (in modern-day Uzbekistan), wrote it as an explanatory commentary (*sharḥ*) on his own short exposition (*mukhtaṣar*)[622] of the law entitled *Bidāyat al-mubtadiʾ* (The first step for the beginner). *Al-Hidāya* became one of the most influential and widely read texts of Ḥanafī *fiqh* in the middle and modern periods and was the subject of numerous commentaries, synopses, supercommentaries, and glosses.[623]

Later generations of Muslim scholars valued al-Marghīnānī's text as a trustworthy and authoritative *fiqh* text that was particularly accessible to both students and legal practitioners.[624] Covering eight volumes in modern print, *al-Hidāya* was popular among Muslim scholars in early modern India[625] and served as the "fundamental text"[626] of legal education in Ottoman *medrese*s.[627] In ninth-/fifteenth-century Iran, the work enjoyed a similar status, as a Timurid curriculum from this period proves.[628] In Mamluk Cairo, *al-Hidāya* was likewise one, if not the standard textbook of Ḥanafī *fiqh*.[629] Al-Qalqashandī's enu-

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621   *Al-Hidāya* is mentioned in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 46–7, 112, 113–4, 146–7, 192, 261–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 80–1. See appendix 1 for detailed information on references to this work.

622   On the significance of *mukhtaṣar*s for the development of *fiqh*, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 181–2; and on this type of legal literature in general, see Calder, *Jurisprudence* 22, 39, 112 and *passim*.

623   Heffening, al-Marghīnānī 557–8. See also Meron, Note 414; van Ess, *Träume* 55–7; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 28–32, 42–8; Müller, Law 271; Ghani, Justifying 99–102.

624   On these innovations, see Meron, Note 411–4.

625   Malik, *Islam* 194; Robinson, Knowledge 182.

626   Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 214.

627   Robinson, Knowledge 175; Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 202, 214. For its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Taşkömür, Books 391, 393–4, 403–5.

628   Subtelny and Khalidov, Curriculum 223, 227, 230.

629   Berkey, *Transmission* 154, calls it "a fundamental textbook" in Mamluk Cairo.

meration of Ḥanafī *fiqh* works that a Mamluk scribe should know lists it as the only noteworthy medium-length (*mutawassiṭ*) book. Before that, he identifies its textual basis, *Bidāyat al-mubtadiʾ*, as the first Ḥanafī work that his readers should be familiar with.[630]

Against this background, it makes sense that *al-Hidāya* is the legal work that most often appears in our *majālis* texts. The choice of a Ḥanafī *fiqh* work fits in well with the fact that the most prominent *majālis* attendees such as al-Ghawrī and his favorite ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna were Ḥanafīs and while the participants of the sultan's *majālis* were interested in other *madhhab*s as well, our sources incorporate statements of their explicit commitment to the Ḥanafī school. For example, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* includes discussions between Ibn al-Shiḥna and al-Ghawrī in which they refer to the Ḥanafī school of law as "our *madhhab*."[631] Other passages praise Abū Ḥanīfa[632] and present the rulings of his school as particularly convincing.[633] Similarly, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* not only explicitly declares that al-Ghawrī was a Ḥanafī,[634] but also shows the sultan expounding Abū Ḥanīfa's superior status over other jurists.[635] *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* cites the sultan as siding with the Ḥanafī school, too.[636] Hence, there can be no doubt that the authors of our sources experienced the *majālis* debates as clearly pro-Ḥanafī events. Therefore, it makes sense that a textbook of this school would be the legal reference work most often referred to, especially since such references reaffirmed the Ḥanafī identity of important members of the sultan's court society. This reaffirmation of a shared identity should not be trivialized, given that the common Ḥanafī orientation was an important link between the Mamluk military elite and members of the *ʿulamāʾ*.[637]

Moreover, the *majālis* offered those who were not full-fledged jurists opportunities to familiarize themselves with the legal rulings of different schools, thereby enabling them to better predict how a judge of a given *madhhab* would rule in a specific case. If the participants of the *majālis* wanted to know how a given situation would be legally evaluated from a Ḥanafī perspective, it made

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630   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473.

631   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 232 (two instances).

632   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 289–91.

633   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 299.

634   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 1ᵛ.

635   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 89ʳ–89ᵛ. See also the parallel passage in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 149–50. See also Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 88ʳ–89ʳ, 102ʳ–103ᵛ, 105ᵛ–106ʳ.

636   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4–5.

637   Berkey, *Transmission* 147.

sense to base their reflections on a work such as *al-Hidāya*, which represented the generally accepted and widespread interpretation of the law of this school.

To those members of the *majālis* who were legally trained Ḥanafī scholars, *al-Hidāya* must have appeared to be the most obvious reference work for the legal rulings of this school. Furthermore, many of those attendees who were active in the legal, administrative, or educational realm were probably intimately acquainted with the contents of this standard text and could cite it on an ad hoc basis in the *majālis* discussions.

A survey of the other legal texts referred to in our *majālis* texts indicates that most of the works quoted or referred to came from the Ḥanafī school and that all of them belonged to mainstream Sunni legal scholarship of the middle period. In addition to *al-Hidāya*, the *majālis* texts refer to eight other Ḥanafī legal texts, all of which, with the exception of the first one, are mentioned just once:

(1) The legal compendium *al-Mukhtār fī madhhab Abī Ḥanīfa* (The abridged work on the school of Abū Ḥanīfa) by ʿAbdallāh b. Maḥmūd al-Mawṣilī (d. 682/1283) which,[638] together with *al-Hidāya*, was one of the most authoritative Ḥanafī textbooks of the Mamluk and later periods.[639] Al-Qalqashandī lists it as one of the most important Ḥanafī *fiqh* texts of his time.[640]

(2) The *fatwā* collection known as *Fatāwā Qāḍīkhān* (The *fatwā*s of Qāḍī Khān) by Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Manṣūr al-Awzajandī Qāḍī Khān (d. 592/1196),[641] which served as a teaching tool in Ottoman *medrese*s during the tenth/sixteenth century.[642]

(3) *Khulāṣat al-fatāwā* (The quintessence of *fatwā*s), a *fatwā* collection by Iftikhār al-Dīn Ṭāhir b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī (d. 543/1147)[643] that was highly popular with Ḥanafī scholars of the late middle period and was also used for teaching purposes.[644]

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638   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 171; (ed. ʿAzzām) 66.

639   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 32. See also Calder, *Jurisprudence* 23–8; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 382.

640   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473.

641   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 74; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83–4.

642   Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 204, 214–5. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 465; Suppl. i, 644; Hallaq, From Fatwās 40, 44, 49; Hallaq, *Authority* 181–2, 184, 188–9; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 64–8, 72–3; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Taşkömür, Books 395, 407–8.

643   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 74–5.

644   Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 204, 214. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. i, 641; Hallaq, From Fatwās 40; Hallaq, *Authority* 181.

(4) *Kanz al-daqāʾiq* (The treasure of subtle points) by Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 711/1310),[645] a legal compendium and "authoritative work"[646] in the *madhhab* tradition; it played a significant role in the teaching of Ḥanafī *fiqh* in the Ottoman realm during the tenth/sixteenth century[647] and also appears in al-Qalqashandī's list of prominent texts.[648]

(5) *Fuṣūl al-iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* (The sections of perfections on the foundations of rulings), better known as *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿImādiyya* by Abū l-Fatḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Abī Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Jalīl al-Marghīnānī (d. after 651/1253), a grandson of the author of *al-Hidāya*. This text gained currency as a well-known work on legal procedure.[649]

(6) The *fatwā* collection *al-Fatāwā l-ẓāhiriyya* (Ẓahīr [al-Dīn's] *fatwā*s) written by Ẓahīr al-Dīn Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥasan al-Marghīnānī (d. ca. 600/1203–4).[650]

(7) *al-Muḥīṭ al-burhānī fī fiqh al-Nuʿmānī* (Burhān [al-Dīn's] comprehensive work on the jurisprudence of al-Nuʿmān)[651] by another scholar from Marghīnān called Burhān al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-Bukhārī (d. 616/1219). The large number of manuscripts of this work we still have today attests to its popularity,[652] as does the fact that al-Qalqashandī lists it as an important comprehensive Ḥanafī legal text.[653]

(8) The *fatwā* collection known as *al-Fatāwā al-Tatarkhāniyya* (The *fatwā*s of Tatarkhān) by Farīd al-Dīn ʿĀlim b. al-ʿAlāʾ al-Indarbatī (d. 786/1381),[654] which was popular with South Asian Ḥanafīs.[655]

The primary focus of these Ḥanafī legal texts that appear in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* lies in *furūʿ al-fiqh*, that is, the field of knowledge dealing with the substantive regulations and positive rules of law, rather than *uṣūl al-fiqh*, that is, the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. This aptly reflects the con-

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645 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 70–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 26.

646 Hallaq, From Fatwās 40.

647 Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 204, 215. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 265; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 32–6; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Taşkömür, Books 393, 406–7.

648 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473.

649 Heffening, al-Marghīnānī 558. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 382.

650 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 96. On the work Heffening, see al-Marghīnānī 558; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. i, 651.

651 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 87.

652 Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 464; Suppl. i, 642.

653 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473. See also Hallaq, From Fatwās 40.

654 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 111.

655 Malik, *Islam* 195. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 432; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Taşkömür, Books 408.

tents of the *fiqh* discussions narrated in our sources, which also engage, almost exclusively, with issues of *furūʿ*. This observation suggests that the members of the sultan's circle were more interested in the practical rulings that should be applied to a given legal case than in their theoretical background.

Moreover, many of the works listed above are collections of *fatwā*s. As Wael Hallaq argued, *fatwā*s and compilations of such texts played a pivotal role in the evolution of the law in the post-formative periods of Islamicate history, as they related actual legal practice to scholarly *fiqh* discourse and thus became a decisive vehicle for legal change.[656] Hallaq writes:

> [E]manating from the world of legal practice, the *fatwā*s […] were col-
> lected and published, particularly those among them that contained new
> law or represented new legal elaborations on older problems that contin-
> ued to be of recurrent relevance. […] [T]hese *fatwā* collections became
> part and parcel of the authoritative legal literature.[657]

Among Ḥanafīs, *fatwā* collections had a recognized status as authoritative legal writings:

> In Ḥanafite law, […] [*fatwā*s] formed the third tier of authoritative legal
> doctrine reflecting the contributions made by jurists who flourished after
> the first masters of the school […], who contributed the first and second
> tiers. In sheer size and in the daily reality of legal practice, however, the
> third tier was the most important, as it reflected the multiple accretions
> and successive modifications of the "basic legal corpus" of the first mas-
> ters.[658]

Thus, we can interpret the presence of numerous references to *fatwā* collec-
tions in our sources as an indication that the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*
kept abreast with recent *fiqh* developments with a special focus on legal innov-
ations that came to bear in daily legal practice. As presented in our sources,
they not only studied texts such as al-Marghīnānī's *al-Hidāya*, al-Nasafī's *Kanz
al-daqāʾiq*, and al-Mawṣilī's *al-Mukhtār* that defined the scholarly mainstream

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656   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 178–81. See also Hallaq, From Fatwās, esp. 30–62; Hallaq, *Authority* 174,
       180–208, 233–5, 240–1; Gleave, Introduction, in Calder, *Jurisprudence* 4–5, 7–8, 18–20;
       Müller, Recht 250. For a discussion critical of Hallaq's position, see Calder, *Jurisprudence*
       116–66.
657   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 178–9.
658   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 179. See also Hallaq, From Fatwās 39–40; Hallaq, *Authority* 180–2.

within the Ḥanafī school, but were also interested in texts that spearheaded the progress in this legal tradition.[659]

These observations also apply, with some limitations, to the Shāfiʿī and Mālikī legal texts that appear in our sources.[660] Among Shāfiʿī texts, we find, primarily, standard textbooks and *fatwā* collections. Predominant among them are works by Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), an author whose legal opinions defined—together with those of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāfiʿī (d. 623/1226)—the accepted views of the Shāfiʿī school during the late middle period.[661] Among the Mālikīs, the only author cited is Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarafī (d. 685/1285), one of the most authoritative Mālikī jurists of the Mamluk period.[662]

The following Shāfiʿī and the Mālikī texts could be identified:[663]

(1) Al-Nawawī's *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn wa-ʿumdat al-muftīn* (The garden of students and the support of *muftī*s)[664] was one of the author's main works in *fiqh* and was thoroughly addressed by later commentators.[665] Al-Qalqashandī counts it among the most important medium-length Shāfiʿī works.[666]

(2) The collection of al-Nawawī's *Fatāwā*[667] compiled by one of his pupils was one of the most influential specimens of this type of literature in the Shāfiʿī school.[668]

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659 On legal change in the middle period in general, see, e.g., Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 182–3; Hallaq, From Fatwās 29–31, 48–54, 57–9, 61–2; Hallaq, *Authority* 139, 142, 145, 166–235, 239–41; Johansen, Literature; Jackson, Kramer, esp. 29, 43, 45–51; Gleave, Introduction, in Calder, *Jurisprudence* 3–9, 18–20.

660 Ḥanbalī texts are notably absent from the *majālis* accounts, and it is unclear whether any prominent Ḥanbalīs participated in these events.

661 Rapoport, Diversity 215. See also Heffening, al-Nawawī 1041; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 74, 104, 164; Hallaq, *Authority* 134, 136, 147.

662 Rapoport, Diversity 215. On him and his legal works, see also Jackson, al-Ḳarāfī; Jackson, *Law*.

663 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 95, refers to a legal opinion of the Shāfiʿī Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥalīmī (d. 403/1012–3), but the precise source could not be identified. The same applies to a statement attributed to al-Nawawī in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 266.

664 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83–4; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 22–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18–9.

665 Heffening, al-Nawawī 1041. See also Haarmann, Library 332; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 499; Calder, *Jurisprudence* 87–99; Hallaq, *Authority* 96.

666 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 472.

667 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 75.

668 On this text, see also Heffening, al-Nawawī 1041; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 498; Hallaq, *Authority* 175, 184.

(3)   The *Fatāwā*[669] of Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), the long-time Shāfiʿī
        chief judge of Damascus whose teachings influenced the development of
        his *madhhab* to a degree that, at times, was seen as second only to that of
        al-Nawawī and al-Rāfiʿī.[670]

(4)   *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* (The collection of the extensive works),[671] a Shāfiʿī *uṣūl
        al-fiqh* work also by Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī that was widely studied and com-
        mented on in Mamluk Cairo.[672]

(5)   *al-Dhakhīra* (The keeping one),[673] a multi-volume compendium of Mālikī
        furūʿ al-fiqh[674] by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī which Brockelmann describes
        as "one of the most respected Mālikī manuals,"[675] while al-Qalqashandī
        lists it among the most well-known works of this *madhhab*.[676]

While we now know something about the sources of the legal expertise reflec-
ted in the replies to the legal questions raised in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is still
not clear where these questions came from. Given that some of them form full-
fledged sets of closely related and, at the same time, quite abstract queries, we
cannot realistically assume that assume that all of them were spontaneous con-
tributions by the *majālis* attendees.

There is a passage in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that provides a clue to the
solution of this problem:

> **Second question:** Shaykh Tanum[677] read from the book of riddles (*kitāb
> al-alghāz*): "What is the situation of a community that performs a ritual
> prayer of four *rakʿa*s, then a misdeed (*ithm*) befalls the *imām* and sub-
> sequently, the prayer of the community is invalidated?"
>
> **Answer:** It is said in the book: "[This is the case] if it becomes clear to
> the *imām* in his heart that he is in a state of major ritual impurity during
> the prayer."[678]

The noteworthy feature of this passage is the reference to a "book of riddles"
(*kitāb al-alghāz*). This book seems to have consisted of not just any type of

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669   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 40–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18–24.
670   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 164–5. On the *Fatāwā*, see Calder, *Jurisprudence* 116–200; Brockel-
       mann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 103.
671   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 239–40, 265.
672   On this work, see Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 109.
673   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 270–1.
674   Jackson, al-Ḳarafī 436. On this work, see also Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 481.
675   Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, Suppl. i, 665.
676   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 473.
677   This person could not be identified.
678   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 60.

brainteasers, but, at least in part, of riddles with legal content. Thus, it belongs to a well-established, but long-ignored genre of legal writings: the so-called *alghāz fiqhiyya* (legal riddles) literature. Apart from a pioneering study on primarily Mālikī legal riddles by Matthew L. Keegan[679] and a discussion by Elias G. Saba on the connection between legal riddles and the genre of legal distinctions (*furūq*),[680] this type of literature has received almost no attention in European-language publications.[681]

Collections of legal riddles published as independent works began to emerge in the Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanafī schools over the course of the late middle period.[682] Based on the example of the book of legal riddles by the Mālikī Ibn Farḥūn (d. 799/1397), Keegan describes the typical structure of legal riddles as follows:

> Each riddle functions as a legal opinion (*fatwā*) in reverse. [...] [A] riddle begins with [1] a legal assessment [*ḥukm*] that is obviously incorrect or absurd. The solution to the riddle [2] involves describing the scenario that makes that legal ruling correct. [...] [The] riddles usually end with a unit [3] indicating the work of *furūʿ* in the author's legal school (*madhhab*) that contains this particular *ḥukm*.[683]

Keegan argues that collections of legal riddles fulfilled four functions. First, as pedagogical tools, such brainteasers could be employed in the teaching of law, to stir the students' competitive spirit and curiosity, while at the same time testing their knowledge. Second, the compilation of a book of legal riddles demonstrated its author's erudition. Third, especially to readers trained in Islamic jurisprudence, the reading of a work of legal riddles must have been at times quite entertaining, amusing, and aesthetically pleasing. Fourth, Keegan argues that legal riddles also contributed to the development of new legal rulings that found their way into works of *furūʿ al-fiqh*, thus leading to legal change in a way similar to what Hallaq suggested in the case of *fatwā*s. However, in the case of change induced by riddles, theoretical reflections rather than practical necessities influence the evolution of the law.[684]

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679 Keegan, Levity. I thank Matthew L. Keegan (New York) for discussing with me his research results on legal riddles and for granting me access to his study before it was published.

680 Saba, *Harmonizing* 119–56, esp. 132–41.

681 Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 157, 344, mentions legal riddles in passing.

682 Keegan, Levity 225–7; Saba, *Harmonizing* 119.

683 Keegan, Levity 215–6.

684 Keegan, Levity 216–7, 219–25, 238–9. See also Saba, *Harmonizing* 14, 132–6, 139–41.

Based on Keegan's arguments, we can understand legal riddling as an inter-
pretative process playing a notable role in the development of *fiqh* during the
late middle period. The development and discussion of legal riddles was thus
state of the art in legal scholarship during al-Ghawrī's time. Given the fact
that, according to Keegan's definition, numerous legal riddles appear in *Nafāʾis
majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and that the former work refers
explicitly to a "book of riddles," we have every reason to assume that the parti-
cipants in the sultan's *majlis* also participated in this entertaining and edifying
engagement with the law. This also resonates with the argument of Saba, who
suggests that the phenomenon of legal riddles was closely related to the per-
formance of knowledge about the law in Mamluk *majālis*.[685] The accounts of
al-Ghawrī's *majālis* offer proof for this assumption and help us to better under-
stand the *Sitz im Leben* of this type of literature.

Moreover, there is information about why and how legal riddles entered
into the discussions of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: One of the earliest presently known
Ḥanafī works of the genre was penned by ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, al-
Ghawrī's favorite. This work bears the title *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya fī alghāz
al-ḥanafiyya*, which can be translated as either "The noble treasures in Ḥanafī
riddles" or as "al-Ashraf's treasures in Ḥanafī riddles"—an ambiguity its author
probably intended. Following the latter translation, the work could be under-
stood as having been dedicated by Ibn al-Shiḥna to al-Ghawrī, who bore the
regnal title of al-Malik al-Ashraf. Ibn al-Shiḥna's contemporaries considered *al-
Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* one of his primary scholarly achievements, given that
it is prominently mentioned in his biographies.[686]

In the short introduction of his work, the author points to the importance
of *fiqh* for the Islamic religion before briefly mentioning various types of legal
literature. At the end of this list of genres, he notes:

> Some of them [the jurists] collected problems (*masāʾil*) in *fiqh* in the form
> of riddles (*lughz*), enigmatic formulations (*taʿmīya*), and puzzles (*uḥjīya*)
> in order to train the intellect and to offer diversion so that the indolent
> student would not become weary.[687]

Ibn al-Shiḥna found the works of these previous scholars lacking in length
and comprehensiveness. Therefore, he decided to collect all the material of

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685   Saba, *Harmonizing* 119.
686   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* i.2, 745–6; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 220. See also Brockel-
       mann, *Geschichte* ii, 100–1; Suppl. ii, 94; Keegan, Levity 226; Saba, *Harmonizing* 137–9.
687   Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 3.

this type he could locate, and compile it in his book. The only work he mentions explicitly as a source is *al-Tahdhīb li-dhihn al-labīb* (The refinement for the mind of the intelligent one) by the Ḥanafī scholar ʿAlī b. ʿAlī Ibn Abī l-ʿIzz (d. 792/1390).[688] It stands to reason that this work was accessible to members of al-Ghawrī's court society, given that the sultan's library included a copy of it.[689]

Ibn al-Shiḥna describes his method in composing his book as follows:

> I added to the contents of [Ibn Abī l-ʿIzz's] book the devices and baffling points I could collect. [Moreover,] I appended to this some simple items from the books of the Shāfiʿīs, invented many cases, and rendered into poetry numerous replies belonging to versified questions [written] by others.[690]

Accordingly, Ibn al-Shiḥna included in his work primarily, though not exclusively, Ḥanafī legal riddles, as part of his material comes from Shāfiʿī *fiqh*—an observation that relates well to our earlier discussion regarding the value of knowledge about other schools of law during the Mamluk period.

The contents of Ibn al-Shiḥna's work, as was often the case in compilations of legal riddles, are arranged into chapters following the usual internal structure of *furūʿ al-fiqh* works of his *madhhab*.[691] The chapters vary in length, with the first two chapters on ritual purity and prayer and the one on inheritance law being by far the longest. Most of the content is in prose, but the book also includes a considerable number of versified questions and answers. Most of the questions describe legal rulings that appear to be unusual or far-fetched, while the answers indicate situations in which these rulings are correct. At other times, the questions outline legal situations and ask for legal devices (sg. *ḥīla*) that could be used to avoid unwanted consequences.

A careful perusal of the contents of Ibn al-Shiḥna's *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya fī alghāz al-ḥanafiyya* demonstrates that the work is closely related to the techniques of learning and knowledge transmission that are so distinctive in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Almost any question from Ibn al-Shiḥna's work could also

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688   Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 3. On this work, see also Keegan, Levity 226–7; Saba, *Harmonizing* 14.

689   MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 871 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 582). For another, anonymous *fiqh* work from al-Ghawrī's library, see MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1172 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 564–5).

690   Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 3–4.

691   Keegan, Levity 226.

appear in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* or *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. In addition to this, in at least fifteen instances, questions that appear in *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* are also found in a similar form in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*[692] or *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.[693] In another four instances, passages in *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* feature in a nearly or completely identical form in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*[694] or *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[695]

These observations suggest intertextual connections between the narrative accounts of the *majālis* and *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya*. Given that both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* include overlaps with Ibn al-Shiḥna's work, these interrelations can probably be traced to an engagement with material included in *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* during al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Since we know that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* are not textually related, we would otherwise have to assume that the authors of both texts quoted Ibn al-Shiḥna's *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* independently from each other.

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692   (1) On the purity of water into which a rat has fallen, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 6 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 179. (2) On the impurity of menstruating women, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 14 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 144. (3) On prayer on the day when the Dajjāl appears, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 30 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 19. (4) On how the reading of a passage of the Quran can invalidate one's prayer, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 30–1 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 67. (5) On an oath of divorce, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 85–6 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 36–7. (6) On a family relationship, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 177–8 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 86–7.

693   (1) On the best type of water, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 5 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 223. (2) On how the reading of a passage of the Quran can invalidate one's prayer, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 30–1 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 7. (3) On marriage law, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 81 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 209. (4) On an oath of divorce, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 103 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 303. (5) On a family relationship, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 177–8 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 236. (6) On the division of eight *raṭl*s of oil into equal halves, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 192 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 214; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72. (7) On a legal device to avoid breaking an oath, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 108 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 235–6. (8) On crossing a river with three animals, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 198 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 214–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 73. (9) On crossing a river with three wives, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 198 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 5.

694   (1) On the ritual purity of water, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 6 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 223. (2) On the purity of water into which a rat has fallen, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 6 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 223. (3) On the breaking of the fast, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 65 and Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 220.

695   On an oath of divorce, see Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 101 and al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 56.

The contents of *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* could have been discussed during the *majālis* in several ways. First, Ibn al-Shiḥna's work might have been one of the books that were physically present and served as basis for the discussions in al-Ghawrī's salon. As noted, there is a direct reference to a "book of riddles" of legal character in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Moreover, as a distinguished member of al-Ghawrī's court society, Ibn al-Shiḥna might well have brought his collection of legal riddles to the attention of the ruler and his associates. Furthermore, even though Ibn al-Shiḥna, as the author of *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya*, must have known the material therein very well, the high level of complexity inherent in this kind of riddles and the need for precise formulations might have made it advisable use an aide-mémoire when presenting this kind of brainteasers to the sultan. Besides, in his examination of collections of legal riddles, Saba suggests that such works might have functioned as "blueprints" for *majālis* discussions.[696] While Saba does not offer historiographical evidence to support this assumption, our findings on *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* can be understood as confirmation of it. Finally, as seen above, the title *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* might indicate that the book was meant to be offered to the sultan, possibly during his *majālis*.

However, other observations speak against the assumption that *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* was read during the sultan's salons. First, while some of the questions that this work and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* or *al-Kawkab al-durrī* have in common appear in very similar or indeed identical form in the texts, others show much higher degrees of textual difference. This raises questions about a possible direct connection between *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya*, the sultan's *majālis*, and the texts recounting these events. Second, if *al-Dhakhāʾir al-ashrafiyya* was indeed used during the discussions in the sultan's circle, its influence was rather limited, given that only a tiny fraction of the legal questions in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* have a parallel in Ibn al-Shiḥna's work. Finally, the specific question that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions as coming from the "book of riddles" is not included in the edited version of Ibn al-Shiḥna's work.

It also seems possible that Ibn al-Shiḥna's book was not the basis of the *majālis* discussions, but rather that its author used the *majālis* as a source of material for his work. Given that we do not know when Ibn al-Shiḥna completed his work, this alternative explanation is a plausible way to explain the overlap between our texts. Another possibility is that Ibn al-Shiḥna compiled his work using an unknown text that served as the basis of the *majālis* dis-

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696   Saba, *Harmonizing* 136–7.

cussions. However, none of the other well-known books of riddles available today and written by the early tenth/sixteenth century, including Ibn Abī l-ʿIzz's *al-Tahdhīb li-dhihn al-labīb*,[697] show a degree of resemblance to the contents of the *majālis* discussions comparable to that of Ibn al-Shiḥna's work.[698] Thus, while at present it is not possible to establish the exact relationship between al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and Ibn al-Shiḥna's *al-Dhakhāʾir al-asharifyya*, the chief judge's work elucidates the cultural and educational context of the legal questions discussed in al-Ghawrī's salons, and verifies the close connection between legal riddles and Mamluk *majālis* culture postulated in earlier research.[699] Yet, the question remains, why did al-Ghawrī and the members of his court society dedicate their time to legal riddling.

In their studies of legal riddles, both Keegan and Saba build on Norman Calder's work on the social function of *fatwā*s, whose insights are also relevant for our understanding of legal debates in al-Ghawrī's salons.[700] Calder suggests that especially *fatwā*s not written in response to laymen's questions often had multiple functions in addition to and at times even transcending their practical purposes,[701] as such *fatwā* texts could have a genuinely aesthetic and enjoyable literary value of their own.[702] The same applies, mutatis mutandis, to legal riddles in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: Given their character as a kind of scholarly aperçus, the sultan and his court society might have enjoyed legal riddles as vignettes of aesthetically pleasing and entertaining literature. Hence we should not underestimate the emotional and artistic significance of this specific type of engagement with the law.

Moreover, according to Calder, discussions about legal problems in a question-and-answer form were part of a broader culture of learning and transmission of knowledge in which they fulfilled educational purposes. Especially for more advanced learners, legal riddles with their focus on uncommon situations and minute details were attractive didactic tools.[703] Likewise, Ibn al-Shiḥna's statement in the introduction of his collection of legal riddles, that he had written the book "to train the intellect and to offer diversion so that the indolent

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697   The manuscript used for comparison is MS Princeton, Firestone Library, Garrett 488Y, fols. 100ʳ–134ᵛ.

698   Surveyed works include, in addition to Ibn Abī l-ʿIzz's text, Ibn Farḥūn, *Durrat*; al-Subkī, *Ashbāh*; al-Isnawī, *Ṭirāz*; Ibn Nujayyim, *al-Ashbāh*.

699   Saba, *Harmonizing* 119, 131–2, 136–7.

700   Cf. esp. Keegan, Levity 218; Saba, *Harmonizing* 140–1.

701   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 182–3, 187–8, 198–9.

702   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 185–7.

703   Cf. for the parallel case of *fatwā*s Calder, *Jurisprudence* 185–7.

student would not become weary,"[704] clearly points to its educational purposes. With regard to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, we should keep in mind that during the middle period, oral communication about legal problems was highly significant, given that *fiqh* knowledge "was still being transmitted, to a large extent, through ongoing live debates of issues,"[705] as Bernard Weiss noted.

Furthermore, legal riddles offered the *majālis* participants an opportunity to demonstrate their skills. To borrow a formulation from Calder, legal riddles could be "juristic and educational display piece[s]"[706] underlining the abilities of those proposing and solving these brainteasers. Thereby, they, as Keegan argues, might even contribute to the development of legal doctrine. For trained legal scholars such as Ibn al-Shiḥna, mastery of the law was their most important asset of cultural capital, the one on which their career was based. In a world of never-ending courtly competition, these men found in the discussions about legal riddles in the sultan's salon a prominent platform by which to prove themselves competent legal scholars.[707]

For the sultan, legal riddling constituted a performative and communicative demonstration of the qualities ideally expected from him. For members of the Mamluk ruling elite like him, legal competence was important for the fulfillment of administrative and judiciary duties.[708] Moreover, as discussed in more detail below,[709] learned activities such as legal riddling can also be seen as part of a communicative strategy that legitimized al-Ghawrī's rule, given that the legitimacy of Muslim rulers benefited not only from the application of Islamic law in their realm according to the rules laid down by Muslim jurists,[710] but also from displays of their own legal competence.[711]

Following Calder, who ascribes to *fatwā*s a ritual and communal function as a way of engaging with revelation and actualizing one's position in the community of believers,[712] we may also interpret the engagement with legal riddles in the sultan's *majlis* as representing a communicative and performative confirmation of the attendees' religious identities. When discussing legal riddles,

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704   Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 3.
705   Weiss, *Search* 22.
706   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 182.
707   Cf. for the parallel case of *fatwā*s based on hypothetical scenarios, see Calder, *Jurisprudence* 185. For a dissenting opinion, doubting that *fatwā*s based on hypothetical scenarios existed in relevant numbers, see Hallaq, From Fatwās 37–8; Hallaq, *Authority* 179–80.
708   Mauder, *Krieger* 165.
709   See section 6.3.1 below.
710   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 71, 130–1, 149, 152.
711   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 132. See also Khalidi, *Thought* 196.
712   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 187–91, 198–9.

al-Ghawrī and those around him participated in an activity that linked them, via the stipulations of the law, to the Quranic revelation and the Prophet's example.[713] As Ibn al-Shiḥna noted in his book on legal riddles, for him and his contemporaries "*fiqh* [was] the basis of religion (*'umdat al-dīn*)."[714] Hence, spending one's time on the minute details of *fiqh* was in itself a form of worship.[715]

In conclusion, we can understand the debates about legal topics in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as fulfilling several functions at the same time. Practical consideration obviously played an important role, given that debates about legal topics contributed to a transmission of knowledge about issues that were personally relevant to the attendees, such as the permissibility of chess or the stipulations that apply to divorce oaths. More broadly, the *majālis* were also an educational venue in which those present learned about the differences between the four Sunni schools of law—a topic that in Mamluk times was of considerable practical importance, given that the juridical system was characterized, on the one hand by a predictable, but inflexible adherence to the generally accepted views of a given school of law, and on the other hand by a considerable degree of legal diversity, thanks to the existence of four schools of almost equal standing.

Yet, as the example of the legal riddles showed, practical and here especially educational considerations were not the only discernible motivations for the legal debates in the *majālis*. In developing a deeper understanding of why these discussions took place, aesthetic, representational, and religious rationales deserve attention as well, as does their entertainment value. Arguably, such motivations had a considerable influence in shaping how legal topics became the most frequent subject of debate in al-Ghawrī's salons.

4.2.2   *Quranic Exegesis*
Next to topics of Islamic law, discussions about Quranic exegesis or *tafsīr*[716] were a predominant feature of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, more than one-fourth of all questions are from this field, whereas in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* approximately one-fifth of the narrated debates deal with Qur-

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713   Cf. Calder, *Jurisprudence* 190.

714   Ibn al-Shiḥna, *al-Dhakhāʾir* 3.

715   Cf. Calder, *Jurisprudence* 187, 189, 199.

716   On *tafsīr* and related terms, see, e.g., Saleh, *Formation* 92–5; Gilliot, Exegesis 99–101; Ullah, *Exegesis* 58–62; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI*²) 83–4; Rippin, Tafsīr (*ER*) 236–7; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 13–22.

anic exegesis. Likewise, *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* lists *tafsīr* as one of the prominent disciplines in the sultan's salons.[717] The fact that two treatises included in al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* deal with issues of *tafsīr* likewise attests to the significance of this discipline in the intellectual context of al-Ghawrī's court.

The accounts of *tafsīr* debates in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* comprise explicit references to earlier authorities and written sources, even more than the cases of *fiqh* debates. This observation agrees with Walid Saleh's notion of Muslim exegetical engagement with the Quranic text as a "genealogical"[718] enterprise in which every exegete "has always been dependent on an ancient inherited corpus of material."[719] Despite the fact that the exegetical passages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* do not constitute full-fledged works of *tafsīr*, their frequent references to earlier works and authorities link these texts to the broader *tafsīr* tradition. This suggests that the exegetical debates in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were part of the same hermeneutical tradition that manifested itself in the major *tafsīr* works of the premodern Islamicate world.

While this also applies, mutatis mutandis, to other fields of scholarly engagement in the sultan's *majālis*, the debates about issues of Quranic exegesis are unique in so far as they not only include numerous references to and quotations from earlier texts, but they also feature a sophisticated and comprehensive discussion of one of these older writings, such that it reaches the level of a meta-discussion of this work *as text*. This singular example of a discussion that not only relies on an older work, but even makes that work the object of intellectual struggle elucidates, in an unparalleled manner, the dynamic communicative processes in which older texts were used, discussed, and questioned in the *majālis*. To fully grasp the significance of this particular debate about this older *tafsīr* text, however, we must first systematically examine the bases on which *majālis* debates about *tafsīr* usually took place.

Apart from a few passages mentioning very early figures such as Ibn ʿAbbās (d. ca. 68/687),[720] most references in the *majālis* to earlier authorities in Quranic exegesis point to written works. Out of the ten works mentioned,[721] nine

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717   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1993.

718   Saleh, *Formation* 14.

719   Saleh, Remarks 18. See also Saleh, *Formation* 14–6.

720   Cf., e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 55, 106–7.

721   The only works that are taken into account are those that are referred to or quoted directly in the *majālis* texts.

could be identified beyond doubt.[722] These fall into two categories: The first group consists of six works quoted or referred to only once or twice, whereas the second group consists of three more frequently cited works.

The first group comprises the following texts, with works quoted twice mentioned first:

(1) Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd al-Baghawī's (d. 516/1122) *Maʿālim al-tanzīl fī l-tafsīr wa-l-taʾwīl* (The characteristics of revelation on exegesis and interpretation);[723]

(2) Muqātil b. Sulaymān's (d. 150/767) *Tafsīr*;[724]

(3) Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Naqqāsh's (d. 351/962) *Shifāʾ al-ṣudūr al-muhadhdhab fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (The refined remedy for apprehensions about the exegesis of the Quran);[725]

(4) Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl al-Qurʾān* (The collection of explanation of the interpretation of the Quran);[726]

(5) Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035)[727] *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (The unveiling and explanation of the exegesis of the Quran);[728] and

(6) al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Nīsābūrī's (d. 729/1328–9) *Gharāʾib al-Qurʾān wa-raghāʾib al-furqān* (The pecularities of the Quran and the desired points of evidence).[729]

722　The unidentified work is called "*tafsīr al-imām*" in a discussion on Q 17:1 in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5–6. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* was often referred to in this way, but the quotation in question does not appear to come from this work.

723　Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 18; (ed. ʿAzzām) 12 (on 107:4–5); (MS) 174 (on 43:81). On this work, see Saleh, *Formation* 208–9; Saleh, Remarks 20; Gilliot, Exegesis 112; Saleh, Gloss 230; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 234–8; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Goudarzi, Books 275–6, 293. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 470, mentions it as being among the most important Quran commentaries.

724　Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 63 (on Q 46:35); 202 (on Q 19:71). On this work, see Gilliot, Exegesis 106–7; Rippin, Tafsīr (*ER*) 238–9.

725　Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 20 (on Q 97:1–3); 103 (on Q 5:55). On this work, see Sezgin, *Geschichte* i, 44–5.

726　Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 23–4 (on Q 97:3). On this work, see Gilliot, Exegesis 110–1; Gilliot, *Exégèse*; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI²*) 86; Rippin, Tafsīr (*ER*) 240; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 205–24.

727　On his biography, see Saleh, *Formation* 25–52.

728　Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 62 (on Q 46:35). On this work, see Saleh, *Formation*; Gilliot, Exegesis 111–2; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 227–34.

729　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 12ᵛ–13ʳ (on Q 2:102). On this work, see also, e.g., al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 321–32.

Modern readers might be surprised by the fact that the two famous *tafsīr*s of al-Ṭabarī and al-Thaʿlabī are each referred to only once in our main sources. In both cases, however, this is in accordance with what we know about Quranic scholarship during the late middle period. Al-Thaʿlabī's work was seen by many Sunnis as permeated with pro-Shiʿi material and therefore unacceptable,[730] whereas al-Ṭabarī's work received so little attention that Saleh speaks about an "apathetic"[731] attitude toward it, although the reasons for this lack of interest are so far not entirely clear.[732]

The second group of *tafsīr* works mentioned three or more times in the *majālis* accounts consists of three well-known works:

(1) Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1209) *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* (Keys to the unseen), also known as *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (The comprehensive Quran commentary);[733]

(2) Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Bayḍāwī's (d. ca. 716/1316) *Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl* (The exegesis of the lights of revelation and the secrets of interpretation);[734] and

(3) by far the most often cited and mentioned work, Jār Allāh Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl* (The revealer of the truths of the revelation).[735]

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730 Saleh, *Formation* 14. See also Saleh, *Formation* 40, 179, 219–21, 224.

731 Saleh, *Formation* 207. See also Goudarzi, Books 279–80.

732 Saleh, *Formation* 207–8.

733 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 62 (on Q 46:35); 94 (on Q 2:7); 131–3 (on Q 7:19). On this work, see Gilliot, Exegesis 115; Griffel, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī 342, 344; Calder, Tafsīr 110–5; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI²*) 86–7; Rippin, Tafsīr (*ER*) 240; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 290–6; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Goudarzi, Books 269–70, 291. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 470, mentions the work as being among the most famous Quran commentaries.

734 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 62 (on Q 46:35); 103 (on Q 5:55); 110 (on Q 2:31); 174 (on Q 43:81); 189 (on Q 66:6); Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 7ʳ (on Q 28:34–5). On this work, see Gilliot, Exegesis 116; Ullah, *Exegesis* 2, 41; Lane, *Commentary* 89–90; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI²*) 87; Rippin, Tafsīr (*ER*) 240; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 296–304; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Goudarzi, Books 269, 272–3, 293–4.

735 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 17; (ed. ʿAzzām) 12 (on Q 107:4–5); (MS) 62 (on Q 46:35); 96–7 (on Q 18:82); 102 (on Q 5:55); 110 (on Q 27:23); 143–4 (on Q 19:31); 174 (on Q 43:81); 221–2 (on Q 27:17–8); 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75 (on Q 2:260); (MS) 233; (ed. ʿAzzām) 76; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 160 (on Q 33:72); Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 295 (on Q 28:27); Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 138 (on Q 12:98). For a reference to this text in a work written by one of the *majālis* participants, see Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fol. 149ʳ. On this work, see Lane, *Commentary*; Lane, Book; Ullah, *Exegesis*; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr* i, 429–82; and for its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Goudarzi, Books 269–72, 291–3.

The fact that these three texts appear in our *majālis* sources as the most often relied upon *tafsīr*s suggests a close connection between the exegetical engagement with the Quranic text in the sultan's salons and the *madrasa* education of the time. As Walid Saleh pointed out, the "al-Bayḍāwī—al-Zamakhsharī—al-Rāzī triad" stood "at the centre of *tafsīr* seminary education [...] since the seventh Hijrī century."[736] This was especially true of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf*; it was at the "centre of the Sunnī curriculum"[737] in Quranic exegesis during the middle period, and rivaled only by al-Bayḍāwī's *Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl* which was partly based on it.[738]

Generally recognized as an expert in matters of grammar, philology, and rhetoric,[739] al-Zamakhsharī was also a respected Quranic exegete who applied his linguistic skills to the Quranic text in a way that even members of competing theological groups found convincing.[740] As manuscript evidence shows, al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* was one of the most widely available *tafsīr*s in the Islamicate middle period before the age of printing.[741] Moreover, *al-Kashshāf* served as a starting point for dozens of later authors writing of their own exegetical works.[742] Kifayat Ullah states that "[n]o other book in the history of *tafsīr* has been commented upon [...] more than *al-Kashshāf*."[743]

The wide reception of this text could be considered surprising given the confessional identity of its author. For at least the major part of his life, Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī was a member of the Muʿtazila, a theological school whose teachings Sunni Muslims considered largely unacceptable.[744] Although there is a tradition in the premodern biographical literature that al-Zamakhsharī con-

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736　Saleh, Remarks 10–1. See also Goudarzi, Books 268–9, 280.

737　Saleh, Remarks 8. See also Saleh, Gloss 218.

738　Saleh, Remarks 12. See also Saleh, Remarks 21; Saleh, Gloss 228; Gilliot, Exegesis 116; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI²*) 85. Al-Zamakhsharī's and al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr*s are listed in Ottoman and Safawid curricula, cf. Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus, here 196–8, 207–11; Robinson, Knowledge, here 176, 180. The Mughal curriculum studied in Robinson, Knowledge, here 183, lists only al-Bayḍāwī's work. On al-Zamakhsharī's work in Mamluk education, see Berkey, *Transmission* 185–6. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 470, mentions the work as one of the most famous Quran commentaries.

739　Gilliot, Exegesis 115.

740　Ullah, *Exegesis* 3.

741　Lane, *Commentary* 58–61. See also Ullah, *Exegesis* 4, 35–6.

742　Ullah, *Exegesis* 38.

743　Ullah, *Exegesis* 4. See also Lane, *Commentary* 299–332; Ullah, *Exegesis* 32, 38, 57; and on the reception history of the work, see Lane, *Commentary* 86–91. See also Saleh, Ibn Munayyir; Saleh, Gloss.

744　On al-Zamakhsharī's biography, writings, and confessional identity, see Lane, *Commentary* 9–47, 141–2; Ullah, *Exegesis* 11–32.

verted to Sunnism toward the end of his life, he was undoubtedly a Muʿtazilī when he penned *al-Kashshāf*.[745]

The question as to what degree al-Zamakhsharī's Muʿtazilī theological outlook influenced his exegetical work has received considerable attention in modern scholarship. Up to the mid-2000s, it was generally assumed that *al-Kashshāf* was a Muʿtazilī *tafsīr*.[746] However, in 2006, Andrew Lane argued in his monograph *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary*, that it made little sense to view *al-Kashshāf* as a Muʿtazilī exegetical work.[747] Based primarily on a study of al-Zamakhsharī's exegesis of selected suras, the work came to the following conclusions:

> This study, then, puts to rest the myth that the *Kashshāf* is a "Muʿtazilite commentary" […], and demonstrates that it would even be difficult to define what a "Muʿtazilite commentary" actually is. There is, in fact, so little Muʿtazilism in the *Kashshāf* and so many missed occasions to inject some, that to call it such is a misnomer; nor is there any "special outlook" or "distinctive approach" that can be discerned in the *Kashshāf* by which its Muʿtazilite character could be redeemed.[748]

Lane's results did not remain uncontested. Kifayat Ullah's monograph *al-Kashshāf: al-Zamakhsharī's Muʿtazilite Exegesis of the Qurʾan* (2017) argues that the work "contains a quintessence of Muʿtazilite doctrine."[749] His main argument maintains that the five principles considered constitutive of Muʿtazilī theology—God's unity, His justice, the promise and threat, the existence of an intermediate position between belief and unbelief, and enjoining right and forbidding wrong—are all directly voiced or at least reflected in *al-Kashshāf*.[750] This suggests that the work is strongly influenced by Muʿtazilī teachings, albeit these are not necessarily apparent in the selected sections analyzed in Lane's monograph. Hence, according to Ullah, *al-Kashshāf* can be regarded as "the classical Muʿtazilite exegetical text."[751]

The present study is not intended to contribute to the debate about the confessional nature of *al-Kashshāf*, nor can it bring an end to the ongoing dis-

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745   Lane, *Commentary* xvii.

746   Cf. Ullah, *Exegesis* 2–3, 200; Lane, *Commentary* 221; Lane, Book 48–9.

747   Lane, *Commentary*. See also Lane, Book.

748   Lane, *Commentary* 229. See also Lane, *Commentary* 142–8, 221–2, 230; Lane, Book 68, 86.

749   Ullah, *Exegesis* 1–2.

750   Ullah, *Exegesis* 133–201.

751   Ullah, *Exegesis* 200. also Würtz, *Theologie* 53–4, 280.

pute between Lane and Ullah. However, in the present context, it is relevant that both authors rely on statements from the premodern tradition of writing about al-Zamakhsharī and his *tafsīr* to buttress their respective positions. In his study of al-Zamakhsharī's reputation in the premodern scholarly tradition, Lane acknowledges that if the sources speak about al-Zamakhsharī's confessional identity, in general they consider him a Muʿtazilī,[752] but his study also argues that their "judgment of the author of the *Kashshāf*, as a religious person and as a scholar, is usually positive, even excessively so."[753] Moreover, Lane's monograph states that, "[w]henever there is an evaluation of the *Kashshāf* in the primary sources, it is on the whole positive."[754] According to Lane's work, the historian Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) was the one who put "the only cloud in al-Zamakhsharī's sky"[755] by warning his readers against studying *al-Kashshāf* because of its Muʿtazilī contents, a warning later taken up and reaffirmed by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449).[756] Lane sums up his argument as follows:

> [O]n the whole, neither al-Zamakhsharī nor his commentary was poorly viewed or severely criticized by the Muslim scholarly tradition. He was held in high esteem both for his intellectual capacity and his personal piety and, while his Muʿtazilite leanings were neither unknown nor ignored, they did not become an obstacle for later generations. Likewise with the *Kashshāf*; what was offensive was usually ignored and the work retained its popularity.[757]

Lane thus concludes: "On the whole, there does not seem to have been any kind of overtly hostile attitude towards [al-Zamakhsharī]."[758]

Ullah's interpretation of the opinions voiced in premodern sources about *al-Kashshāf* is notably different. In addition to the critics such as al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī already mentioned by Lane, he adduces several additional examples of authors who considered the presence of Muʿtazilī teachings in *al-Kashshāf* problematic, including Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥayyān

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752 Lane, *Commentary* xvi.

753 Lane, *Commentary* xiv.

754 Lane, *Commentary* xix.

755 Lane, *Commentary* xx.

756 Lane, *Commentary* xx. See also Lane, Book 82–3.

757 Lane, *Commentary* 223. See also Lane, Book 83, 85.

758 Lane, *Commentary* xxii.

al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344), Ibn Khaldūn, and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.[759] In Ullah's reading, "[s]ince its inception, *al-Kashshāf* has been subject to [...] orthodox Sunnī criticism which centered on the basic principles of Muʿtazilite theology."[760]

Thus, Lane and Ullah offer two clearly conflicting accounts of the image of al-Zamakhsharī and his Quran commentary in the premodern literary tradition. Neither author, however, paid any attention to the lengthy discussion of the value of al-Zamakhsharī and his work in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. The section on this issue is not only enriching for what it has to say about the way earlier texts were received and evaluated in the sultan's salons, but is also well-suited to make a contribution to the study of the image of *al-Kashshāf* and its author in the middle period.

As indicated, *al-Kashshāf* is the Quran commentary that appears by far the most often in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Moreover, the *majālis* accounts also include comprehensive information on how *al-Kashshāf* was produced, circulated, and received, making this text one of the very few cases in which an earlier work is not only referred to as a source of information, but indeed discussed as an independent literary entity—a book with a life of its own, so to speak.

The process by which *al-Kashshāf* was written comes up in several passages of our main sources. Both *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* include similar versions of an anecdote about how al-Zamakhsharī's work came to the attention of at least one other scholar while al-Zamakhsharī was writing it. The following version comes from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, where it forms part of an argument that human beings are able to interact with *jinn*s:[761]

> His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "The story about the *shaykh* Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī confirms the assertion that one can see *jinn*s. [Al-Nasafī] had a student from among the *jinn*s. They used to steal [parts of] *al-Kashshāf* from al-Zamakhsharī whenever he finished writing them and the *shaykh* transcribed them. When al-Zamakhsharī had finished composing *al-Kashshāf*, he went to the *shaykh* to present the book to him. The *shaykh* said: 'I have this book [already],' and he presented *al-Kashshāf* to him in exactly the same form (*bi-ʿaynihi*). When Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī saw this book, his heart [almost] burst from anxiety and he nearly died.

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759   Ullah, *Exegesis* 2. See also Ullah, *Exegesis* 54–6, 200. Nevertheless, al-Suyūṭī studied the work, cf. Sartain, *Biography* 28.

760   Ullah, *Exegesis* 2. For similar findings, see Saleh, Ibn Munayyir 88–9; Saleh, Gloss, esp. 218, 222, 224, 227, 249.

761   For the parallel passage, see Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 54ᵛ–55ʳ.

When the *shaykh* noticed that he was on the verge of collapsing, he said: 'Do not be afraid, this is absolutely your composition.' The author of *al-Kashshāf* said: 'How did it come to your house?' He said: 'The *jinn*s who study with me brought it.' Then the *shaykh* said to him: 'How can you deny [the existence] of the *jinn*s after this?' Thereupon, the author of *al-Kashshāf* kissed the *shaykh*'s hand."[762]

This anecdote is obviously not intended primarily as a factual statement about the process by which *al-Kashshāf* was written. Rather, its main message seems to be twofold: First, it reaffirms the Sunni belief in the existence of *jinn*s and refutes what Sunni Muslims understood as the Muʿtazilī teaching on this matter, namely the denial of the existence of this kind of beings. To this end, it employs the figure of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī as a well-known Muʿtazilī who comes to experience the abilities of the *jinn*s and therefore has to admit their existence. Second, the story establishes a hierarchy between the Muʿtazilī al-Zamakhsharī and the prominent Sunni scholar Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/ 1142),[763] and between the two strands of Islam for which the two figures stand.

In addition, the story also provides insights into how al-Zamakhsharī and his *al-Kashshāf* were perceived among the people who recounted and listened to this anecdote, including al-Ghawrī's court society. First, *al-Kashshāf* was obviously well-known among this group, given that it was selected as the central element of the anecdote. Second, al-Zamakhsharī was seen as an almost proverbial representative of the Muʿtazila.

The fact that al-Zamakhsharī, as a historical figure and a representative of the Muʿtazila, was well-known to the *majālis* participants is also suggested by his appearance in the historical section on the ʿAbbasid Caliphate of Baghdad in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Here, in the account of the reign of the caliph al-Muqtafī bi-Llāh (r. 530–55/1136–60), the text mentions al-Zamakhsharī's death in 538/1144.[764] Moreover, it includes another anecdote in which al-Zamakhsharī appears together with a famous representative of Sunni Islam. According to this story, upon its completion, al-Zamakhsharī wanted to present his *al-Kashshāf* to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. To this end, he spent three months at the famous scholar's door, but was not granted access. When al-Ghazālī finally left to attend the communal prayer on the day of the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, al-Zamakhsharī waited for him at a bridge and finally managed to hand him a copy of *al-Kashshāf*. Thereupon, al-Ghazālī asked al-Zamakhsharī about his exegesis of

762   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 88–9.
763   On him, see Wensinck, al-Nasafī 969.
764   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 33ᵛ.

Q 24:35: "God is the Light (*nūr*) of the heavens and earth." When al-Zamakhsharī replied that he had interpreted the verse as meaning that "God is the illumin-ator (*munawwir*) of the heavens and the earth," al-Ghazālī rebuked him and said: "You belong to the crappy scholars (*ʿulamāʾ al-qirsh*)." The story ends: "And the author of *al-Kashshāf* [used to] narrate this story and was proud of it, say-ing 'al-Ghazālī counted me among the scholars.' "[765]

This story again presupposes that its audience knows the identity of al-Zamakhsharī and the character of *al-Kashshāf*. Moreover, again it makes a statement about al-Zamakhsharī vis-à-vis an emblematic figure of Sunni Islam. Yet, this story also offers a new perspective, as it raises doubts about al-Zamakh-sharī's competence as an exegete and even styles him as something of laughing-stock who takes pride in the searing censure of a more distinguished scholar.

In contrast, a section from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* clearly demonstrates the respect accorded to al-Zamakhsharī's work in matters of *tafsīr*. The point of debate was the interpretation of Q 2:260, which reads:

> And when Abraham said: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead," He said, "Do you not believe, then?" "Yes," said Abraham, "but just to put my heart at rest." So God said, "Take four birds and train them to come back to you. Then [after killing them] place them on separate hill-tops, call them back, and they will come flying to you: know that God has the power to decide."[766]

One of the *majlāis* attendees suggested that Abraham had killed the birds by pounding them in a mortar (*hāwun*). The sultan, however, disagreed: "His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: 'We have not heard about [them] being pounded. Rather, he cut them to pieces.' When *al-Kashshāf* was brought, its contents were in agreement with what the sultan—may God Most High sup-port him—said."[767] Evidently, the primary intention behind this passage was to make a statement about al-Ghawrī's skills as an exegete. It is noteworthy, however, that here *al-Kashshāf* serves as the supreme authority by which to set the standard of a convincing interpretation of the Quran, and against which even the sultan's words are measured. In the discursive world of the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, one can hardly think of a stronger affirmation of the dis-tinguished status of *al-Kashshāf*.

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765   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 33ᵛ.

766   Trans. Abdel Haleem, modified.

767   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75. *Al-Kashshāf* includes the opin-ion that the birds in Q 2:260 were cut into pieces, cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* i, 310.

Thus, there is a certain tension in the reception of al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* and the assessment of its author in al-Ghawrī's salons as narrated by our main sources. On the one hand, al-Zamakhsharī is clearly labeled a non-Sunni who is intellectually inferior to the supreme personages of the Sunni tradition. This criticism also affects *al-Kashshāf*, given that al-Zamakhsharī's abilities as an exegete are explicitly criticized in parts of the narrative material included in the texts. On the other hand, al-Zamakhsharī and *al-Kashshāf* are so often quoted or referred to in the accounts that there can be little doubt that the work was regarded as one of the pinnacles of the *tafsīr* tradition among the members of al-Ghawrī's court. *Al-Kashshāf* is even presented as a supreme arbiter in questions of *tafsīr* that is used to verify the sultan's competence in this discipline.

This notable tension in the reception of *al-Kashshāf* erupted in an episode that al-Sharīf treats in considerable detail toward the very end of his *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Al-Sharīf's minute coverage of this debate is understandable, given that it resulted in the sultan's decision to banish al-Sharīf and all other salon attendees from his presence. As argued above, there is strong evidence that al-Sharīf penned *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in reaction to these events in an attempt to regain the sultan's favor.[768]

In light of the particular importance of this episode on the writing of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, on the course of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, and given its particular significance to our understanding of how *al-Kashshāf* was viewed by the members of al-Ghawrī's court society, the relevant sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are translated here.[769]

[(MS) 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 135] **Eleventh *Majlis***
I went up [to the citadel] on Tuesday, the 27th of Rajab [911].[770] [The attendees] sat down in the Duhaysha [Hall] for a short period. The *imām* was Shaykh Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Makkī.[771] During [the *majlis*], questions were [discussed].

Narration (*ḥikāya*): The author of *al-ʿAqāyiq*[772] said: When Joseph's brothers arrived at the cistern, they punched and slapped Joseph and wanted to kill him, but Yahūdā prevented them from killing [him]. Thereupon, Joseph wept and kissed the hands and feet of each of them.

768   See section 3.1.1.3 above.

769   Numbers in square brackets indicate the corresponding pages in the manuscript and ʿAzzām's translation.

770   Corresponding to 24 December 1505.

771   On this person, see appendix 2.

772   For the identification of this text, see section 4.2.4 below.

Question: Our lord the sultan said: "It is astonishing that those who committed these abominable acts finally became prophets."

[(ed. ʿAzzām) 136]

Answer: I said: "Oh our lord the sultan, their prophethood is not an established fact."

Dispute: al-Khawāṣṣ said: "I saw in the book that they are prophets."

I said: "You have studied only a bit of the sciences (*shayʾan min al-ʿulūm*). In which book did you see [it]? It does not behoove a commoner to oppose the scholars [(MS) 260] and to say things like this!"

The judge Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī said: "His brothers must have been prophets because a prophet's son is [also always] a prophet."

I said: "According to that, it would be necessary that all people, including even the unbelievers, are prophets, as they are all the children of Adam, the sincere friend [of God], and of Noah, the intimate friend of God. You know that Cain[773] was the very own son Adam, the sincere friend, and that the son of Noah the intimate friend [was Noah's very own son], about whose affairs something has been revealed in the revelation (*tanzīl*)."[774]

Admonition: Our lord the sultan said: "Sharīf, it is not good to oppose the community (*jamāʿa*)."

[…] [(MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 138]

Twelfth *Majlis*

I went up [to the citadel] on Wednesday, the 28th of Rajab [911].[775] [The attendees] sat down in the Duhaysha [Hall] for 64 *daraja*s.[776] The *imām* was *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Razzāq.

The judge Maḥmūd brought fascicles (*karārīs*) of *al-Kashshāf*. The author of *al-Kashshāf* said about the exegesis of "I shall ask [my Lord] to forgive you" [Q 12:98]: "Jacob asked for forgiveness for their sinful behavior and they became prophets in the end."[777]

Invitation (*targhīb*): Our lord the sultan said: "What do you say in reply, Sharīf?"

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773 On Cain and Abel in the Islamic tradition, see Günther, Kain.

774 This is a reference to Q 5:27–31 (about Cain who killed his brother) and Q 11:42–3 (about Noah's son who disbelieved in his father's warnings).

775 Corresponding to 25 December 1505.

776 This equals 4 hours and 16 minutes, making this the longest *majlis* recounted in the work.

777 This sentence is not a literal quotation, but its meaning matches al-Zamakhsharī's exegesis of Q 12:98, although even al-Zamakhsharī acknowledges that there are different opinions about their status as prophets, cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* ii, 504.

I said: "I have been weak for two days, but I say that [accepting] this [transmitted] version (*naql*) depends on two conditions: First, do we agree with the Muʿtazila about the infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) of the prophets or not?[778] [(MS) 262; (ed. ʿAzzām) 139] Second, the statement of the author of *al-Kashshāf* contradicts the Quran, although their sinful behavior is an established fact in God's Book, including disobedience against one's father, lying, selling a Muslim to the land of unbelief, enslaving a Muslim, and accusing the friend of God of theft in saying 'his brother was a thief before him' [Q 12:77]. All these are severe things and do not befit the rank of prophethood."

Our lord the sultan said: "What do you say in reply, judge? Is al-Sharīf's statement that *al-Kashshāf* includes the doctrine of the Muʿtazila right or not?"

He said in reply: "Yes, [it is right.]"

His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "You insane (*majnūn*) judge! When you knew that *al-Kashshāf* follows the doctrine of the Muʿtazila, then why did you draw conclusions from it, bring a quotation from it, and base yourself on it? You fool, your motivation [in doing so] is only self-aggrandizement (*mukābara*), and not learned inquiry (*baḥth*) or scholarly disputation (*munāẓara*)!"

The judge Maḥmūd said: "The author of *al-Kashshāf* was at first a Muʿtazilī, then in the end he repented from Muʿtazilism."

Reply: I said: "The repentance of the author of *al-Kashshāf* does not remove the doctrine of the Muʿtazila from *al-Kashshāf*. We speak [here] [(MS) 263] about *al-Kashshāf*, not about the author of *al-Kashshāf*. [(ed. ʿAzzām) 140] Sometimes, people say with their mouths things that are not in their hearts."

Advice (*naṣīḥa*): His Excellency, our lord the sultan said to me in seclusion (*fī l-khalwa*): "If you do not bring a quotation and a *fatwā* from the scholars [confirming your statement] that the prophethood of Joseph's brothers is not confirmed, then I will have your beard cut off."

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778   Sunnis and Muʿtazilīs shared the theological position that prophets were infallible. Yet, while the prophets' "immunity from unbelief and from major sins both before and after the prophetic mission was considered the unanimous doctrine of the Muʿtazila," the standard Ashʿarī position of the later middle period "restricted the immunity to the time after the mission, admitting both major and minor sins, though not unbelief, before it" (Madelung, ʿIṣma 183, for both quotations). Upon closer scrutiny, this seems to contradict al-Sharīf's argumentation given that Muʿtazilīs like al-Zamakhsharī could not accept the notion that Joseph's brothers sinned but became prophets afterwards; this would only make sense from an Ashʿarī perspective.

I said: "And when I bring the *fatwā*?"

He said: "Then you become a member of the *khawāṣṣ*."

What is fitting (*munāsib*) for this *majlis*: It was said that the author of *al-Kashshāf* clung to the ring of the door of the Kaʿba and said: "I am a young Muʿtazilī *shaykh*. Who [wants to] argue with me?" The Imām al-Ḥaramayn[779] said in reply to him: "There should be no indecent speech or quarreling (*jidāl*) during the pilgrimage."[780]

Final remark (*khātima*): One of the people of merit said:

There are innumerable commentaries of the Quran in the world,

And by my life, there is no one like *al-Kashshāf*.

When I follow guidance and stick to reading it,

Ignorance is like a disease, and *al-Kashshāf* is like the cure.

[(ed. ʿAzzām) 141]

Thirteenth *Majlis*

I went up [to the citadel] on Saturday, the first day of Shaʿbān [911].[781] The *imām* was *shaykh* Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī.[782]

His Excellency, our lord the sultan said to me suddenly: "O you enemy (*ʿadūw*) of the author of *al-Kashshāf*, o you enemy (*dushmān*) of al-Zamakhsharī!"

Thereupon the Ḥanafī chief judge[783] said: "Who is the enemy of the author of *al-Kashshāf*?"

The sultan smiled and said: "Al-Sharīf." [(MS) 264]

Then he said: "Have you brought the *fatwā*?"

I stood up, kissed the ground, and said: "Yes. The initial scenario (*ṣūra*) of the *fatwā* [reads]: 'What do the scholars of religion—may God be satisfied with all of them—say about a person who says that the prophethood of the brothers of Joseph the friend of God—peace be upon him—is not an established fact? Does [this person] fall into something against which one should guard oneself, although Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ said in *al-Shifāʾ*: "And as

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779   This is the famous Ashʿarī theologian Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). Given that al-Zamakhsharī was born in 467/1075 and probably visited Mecca for the first time not too long before 518/1138–9 (Lane, *Commentary* 28–9), this anecdote cannot reflect an actual encounter.

780   This is a partial quotation of Q 2:197. My translation follows Abdel Haleem's but leaves out parts of the verse not appearing in the text.

781   Corresponding to 28 December 1505.

782   On this person, see appendix 2.

783   This is ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna.

for Joseph's brothers, their prophethood is not an established fact,"[784] al-Qurṭubī leaned toward this [position],[785] and *imām* Fakhr al-Dīn[786] and Ibn al-Kathīr said: "There exists no proof (*dalīl*) for the prophethood of Joseph's brothers"?'[787] Then, the most learned of the truly insightful scholars; the proof of the meticulous jurisprudents; my master and the master of the world; the *shaykh al-Islām* of the Arabs and the non-Arabs; [(ed. ʿAzzām) 142] the proof of the religious community, *sharīʿa*, truth, piety, *fatwā*, and religion, Ibrāhīm Ibn Abū [*sic*] Sharīf wrote: 'Praise be to God for guiding to what is right! No difficulty shall befall the one who says that, and those who say that these [aforementioned authorities] are in error is not right. The question [referred to here] is disputed (*khilāfiyya*).' The most learned of the Ḥanafī scholars, the beloved of his Noble Excellency, the sharp-witted, meticulous, and truly insightful one, *shaykh* Burhān al-Dīn al-Karakī[788] declared [this legal opinion] authoritative (*saḥḥaḥahu*).[789] [Likewise,] the *shaykh al-Islām* [(MS) 265], the one who follows the path [to God] (*al-sālik*), the most learned of the scholars of the *madhhab* of Mālik, *shaykh* Burhān al-Dīn al-Damīrī[790] declared it authoritative. [Moreover,] the *shaykh al-Islām*, my master and the master of all human beings of the world, the one who performs [good] deeds and is close [to God], the Ḥanbalī chief judge[791] declared it authoritative. [Finally,] the *mujtahid* of the time, the Shāfiʿī of the period, the one who possesses beautiful characteristics, *shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭawīl declared it authoritative."

When the glance of our lord the sultan fell on the judge Maḥmūd that night, he [that is, the sultan] realized that he had [only] aimed at idle talk

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784   This is a quotation from Abū l-Faḍl Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā l-Yaḥṣubī's (d. 544/1149) *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ fī taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, cf. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *al-Shifāʾ* ii, 373.

785   This is most probably a reference to Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī's (671/1273) *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, in which he says about Q 12:10 "In this lies something that shows that Joseph's brothers were not prophets, neither in the beginning nor in the end, because prophets do not plan to kill a Muslim," al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ* ix, 133.

786   This is most probably a reference to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* in which he argues, regarding Q 12:10, that Joseph's brothers are not prophets, cf. al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* xviii, 94.

787   This is a quotation from Abū l-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, from his discussion of Q 12:7, cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* ii, 469.

788   On this person, see appendix 2; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr* 158–60.

789   On the *taṣḥīḥ* (establishing as authoritative) of legal opinions in Islamic law, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 77–8.

790   On this person, see appendix 2.

791   This is Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Shīshīnī, on whom see appendix 2.

(*ghalaba*) and sophistry (*safsaṭa*) in the debate, that his only wish in the discussion was to aggrandize himself (*mukābara*), and not to show and demonstrate what was right. He only wished to achieve an absolute victory [in debate], even if he was not right [in what he said]. [Moreover, the sultan realized] that the secrets of the exalted *majālis* had been disclosed (*yafsha'u*)[792] among the people and that he [that is, the judge Maḥmūd] had boasted of them among the commoners and the elite. Consequently, annoying ([ed. ʿAzzām] 143] names (*asmā' al-qahariyya*) [*sic*] came to predominate with regard to His Excellency al-Ghawrī. The sultan, the lord of victory and conquests, became [angry] like [our] lord Noah[793]—peace by upon him—and gave orders to expel (*ṭard*) all [present], including al-Sharīf and the lowly one.[794]

After this section, al-Sharīf includes in his work a long anecdote about the ancient Persian king Anushirwān and a wise saying attributed to Alexander the Great, both of which emphasize the importance of not disclosing the secrets of rulers.[795]

The lengthy passage given above shows that the discussion about the exegetical value of *al-Kashshāf* as narrated by al-Sharīf was part of a heated and complex debate that needs to be disentangled before we can fully appreciate its significance for our understanding of the way the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* engaged with the Quranic text.

The starting point of the debate was not uncommon for al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: One of the participants apparently read aloud a passage from a work about the story of the Prophet Joseph. As is shown below, discussions about the stories of the prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) and here especially about the figure of Joseph were a recurring feature in the sultan's salon.[796] This time, the issue was whether or not Joseph's brothers should be regarded as prophets. According to our source, al-Ghawrī was willing to grant this status to Joseph's brothers, despite their misdeeds.[797] Al-Sharīf, however, objected that their status as proph-

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792   I disagree with ʿAzzām, who reads *yufshiʿu*, given that the manuscript has a *fatḥa* above the *yāʾ*.

793   This is a reference to Noah's wrath when confronted with the behavior of his people as narrated, e.g., in Q 71.

794   This last phrase could be translated equally well as "the noble and the common," but here, it seems probable that al-Sharīf wanted to indicate that he, too, was banished from the sultan's presence.

795   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 265–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 143–4.

796   See section 4.2.4 below.

797   For the same view, see also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 290.

ets was not generally agreed upon. Thereupon, a discussion ensued in which two members of the sultan's court society tried to defend al-Ghawrī's position against al-Sharīf, who is presented as standing alone with his view and was therefore criticized by the sultan for opposing the consensus of the community and also, implicitly, the ruler's point of view.

The two people in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* who appear to uphold the sultan's original position were regular participants in the *majālis*.[798] The first, Nūr al-Dīn al-Khawāṣṣ al-Muʾadhdhin, was a rather low-ranking religious official who served as the sultan's muezzin and accompanied him in this capacity on his final trip to Syria.[799] Al-Sharīf obviously perceived Nūr al-Dīn al-Khawāṣṣ' competence as a religious scholar to be limited. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, he recounted how he silenced Nūr al-Dīn al-Khawāṣṣ by referring to the latter's limited knowledge and by calling him a commoner (*ʿāmmī*) amidst learned men.

The second interlocutor who sided with the sultan, the Shāfiʿī judge Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī (d. 952/1545), was apparently a more accomplished scholar than Nūr al-Dīn al-Khawāṣṣ. Born in 869/1464–5 into a Syrian family of considerable scholarly renown, this man served in various influential judicial and educational positions in Syria, including that of chief judge of Jerusalem and *shaykh* of the Dār al-Ḥadīth in Damascus under the Ottomans. Earlier in his life, he had lived in Cairo where he studied with Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and served as a deputy judge of his *madhhab*. During this time, he also seems to have gained access to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[800]

According to al-Sharīf's account of the debate, Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī supported al-Ghawrī's point of view by arguing that, as sons of the Prophet Jacob, Joseph's brothers must be prophets, too. This argument echoed the Quranic notion that many prophets belong to the same genealogical group.[801] Al-Sharīf countered this point with two objections: First, if it were true, all human beings must be prophets, as all of them were descendants of the two prophets Adam and Noah. Second, two sons of prophets mentioned in the Quran, namely Cain the son of Adam and the unidentified disbelieving son of Noah behaved in a way that clearly ruled out the possibility that they were prophets.

Consequently, Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī brought up another argument for his position that Joseph's brothers were indeed prophets. He found a proof text that supported his point in al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* and even took fascicles

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798   See appendix 2.

799   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 43, 77.

800   Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* ii, 800–1.

801   Rubin, Prophets 291. See also Rubin, Prophets 304; Gril, Familie 30.

of this work with him to the *majlis*. Confronted with this new evidence and pressed by the sultan for a comment, al-Sharīf conceded that *al-Kashshāf* indeed supported his opponent's point of view. He then launched a frontal attack on the authority of *al-Kashshāf*, claiming that it contradicts Quranic statements about Joseph's brothers and presented a Muʿtazilī, and thus by implication unacceptable, understanding of prophethood.

According to our source, this second argument provoked al-Ghawrī. When Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī admitted that *al-Kashshāf* did include Muʿtazilī teachings, the sultan became furious and verbally abused the member of his *majlis* who had adduced arguments from a work permeated by what were viewed as heterodox doctrines to support the ruler's point of view. In doing so, he had violated one of the unspoken rules of etiquette in the sultan's *majlis*, namely, he had adduced inadmissible evidence, while concomitantly associating the ruler's point of view with what was perceived as heterodoxy. Therefore, the sultan accused Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī of acting not out of scholarly interest but self-aggrandizement.

Al-Ghawrī then pressured the author of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and demanded that he bring a *fatwā* supporting his view. This incident demonstrates what could be at stake for the participants in the competitive climate of the sultan's *majālis*: If al-Sharīf failed to produce the demanded *fatwā*, he would be openly disgraced by having his beard shaved off.[802] However, if he succeeded in obtaining the document, he had good prospects of becoming a member of the sultan's innermost circle.

Beyond this course of events, when we turn to the narrative representation of the debate in *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we note that al-Sharīf included at the end of his account two small textual units again bearing witness to the tension in the reception of *al-Kashshāf* at al-Ghawrī's court. The first short narrative about al-Zamakhsharī's alleged meeting with al-Juwaynī follows a pattern similar to that of the stories about al-Zamakhsharī's encounters with al-Nasafī and al-Ghazālī discussed above. Again, al-Zamakhsharī, as a representative of the Muʿtazila, meets a paragon of Sunni scholarship and is bested by the latter. Thus we find another variation of the polemical "Sunnism beats Muʿtazilism" motif. Yet, immediately after this anecdote, al-Sharīf reinforces the status of *al-Kashshāf* as one of the most respected *tafsīr*s by including verses that praise the work as a cure to the malady of ignorance.

It might have been this special status of *al-Kashshāf* that prompted al-Sharīf to muster every support for his position he could find, in order to fulfill the sul-

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802　On the shaving of beards as a punishment, see Lange, *Justice* 80, 88, 234.

tan's demand for a *fatwā*. When phrasing the request for his *fatwā*, as quoted in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf mobilized al-Qurṭubī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), and Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, that is, no fewer than four respected Sunni authors to counter al-Zamakhsharī's statement that Joseph's brothers ultimately became prophets. Mustering these scholars can be understood as suggesting that al-Zamakhsharī's opinion had considerable weight and was not easily overcome: It took the authority of four distinguished Sunni authorities to substantiate doubts about al-Zamakhsharī's exegesis.

The precise wording of al-Sharīf's request for the *fatwā* deserves special attention. The sultan had demanded that he bring a *fatwā* establishing "that the prophethood of Joseph's brothers is not confirmed." However, when asking for the *fatwā*, al-Sharīf chose a slightly different question: He asked whether a person who stated that it was not an established fact that Joseph's brothers were prophets had done something that should be avoided. By phrasing the question in this way, al-Sharīf arguably raised the chances that he would receive a reply in his favor: Rather than asking for a decision about the issue at stake, al-Sharīf merely inquired whether a person who held a particular view had done something wrong. Thus, he turned a rather abstract question of *tafsīr* into one of judging a person's behavior. Condemning a person for a particular opinion was a much more far-reaching step than simply taking a side in a scholarly debate. Hence, al-Sharīf's *fatwā* request can be read as a carefully crafted attempt to solicit a ruling in his favor. At the same time, he tried to ensure that regardless of the decision of the authorities issuing the *fatwā*, the position the sultan had earlier endorsed would not be rejected outright. Thus, the phrasing of the request can also be interpreted as an attempt to ensure that the sultan could save face if the legal authorities ruled in al-Sharīf's favor.

According to his text, al-Sharīf's strategy paid off at least in part, as he received a *fatwā* supporting his position without rejecting the sultan's view out of hand, as it ruled that the question of whether Joseph's brothers were prophets was subject to debate.[803] Al-Sharīf's effort to shake al-Zamakhsharī's exegetical authority in this particular question evidently succeeded. Furthermore, he obtained the support of five of the most distinguished scholars of Cairo who confirmed his view. These men came from all four recognized schools of law and included Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf who was the author of the principal *fatwā* and particularly close to Sultan al-Ghawrī, as discussed above.[804]

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803   Al-Suyūṭī's treatise on this question demonstrates its contested character, see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī* i, 298–300.

804   See section 4.1.2.2 above.

Moreover, the fact that two of these scholars held the chief judgeships of their respective *madhhab*s further added to the authority of the ruling.

Nevertheless, al-Sharīf did not come to enjoy the prize he had hoped for, namely his inclusion in the innermost circle of the sultan's court society. According to *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the sultan was furious when he learned the contents of the *fatwā*, which indicated that his position on the issue was open for debate, although not entirely wrong. The first object of his wrath was Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī, who he found guilty of putting his own interests over the scholarly goals of the *majālis*. Moreover, in the context of the debate about the status of Joseph's brothers, internal information on the proceedings of the sultan's *majālis* had been disclosed to unauthorized recipients. Although *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* singles out Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī as one of the people responsible for this breach of trust, we may assume that al-Sharīf, by insisting on his minority view, had also contributed to this situation, especially since he had made details of the discussion known to a broader scholarly audience by soliciting the quoted *fatwā*. This behavior critically endangered the function of the *majālis* as a partly secluded communicative space in which the sultan could interact somewhat freely with members of his court society. As seen, it was possible to prove the sultan wrong in this closed context without any consequences. However, by requesting, from the most famous scholars of Cairo, a *fatwā* that supported his objection against an opinion first voiced by the sultan, al-Sharīf had made the fact generally known that al-Ghawrī had held a disputed opinion, one that he shared with the Mu'tazilī al-Zamakhsharī. Thus, he had counteracted the sultan's efforts to present himself as a pious and learned ruler. Against this background, it becomes understandable why al-Sharīf, together with Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī, was ousted from the sultan's presence. In competing for the sultan's favor, both had violated the rules of the sultan's *majlis*: Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī by putting his own interests over the scholarly goals of the salons and al-Sharīf by soliciting support for his minority position in a way that tarnished the sultan's image as an exemplary and pious ruler.

We can sum up our results regarding the reception of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* by al-Ghawrī's court society as follows: *Al-Kashshāf*, fascicles of which were physically present in the salons, was a highly respected work that often served as the primary authority in exegetical questions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Its contents could not be rejected lightly; they could only be proved wrong by reference to multiple other works of *tafsīr*. Yet, *al-Kashshāf* was also considered permeated by Mu'tazilī teachings and its author was seen as a kind of archetypical representative of this theological current, someone who had repeatedly clashed with respected figures of Sunni Islam. When pointed to the

fact that *al-Kashshāf* was a Muʿtazilī work, al-Ghawrī verbally abused the person introducing it into the salons and declared the text inadmissible.

There is a clear tension between these observations and the statement in Lane's monograph that "[o]n the whole, there does not seem to have been any kind of overtly hostile attitude towards [al-Zamakhsharī as an exegete]."[805] In light of the evidence from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, one rather tends to agree with Ullah's interpretation of the reception history of *al-Kashshāf*, according to which the work "has been subject to [...] orthodox Sunnī criticism"[806] in numerous instances.

By siding with this pious opposition against *al-Kashshāf* and its Muʿtazilī author, al-Ghawrī used a communicative opportunity to present himself as a pious ruler interested in keeping his *majālis* free of what appeared to Sunnis of his age as deviant teachings. Hence, the tension-ridden reception of *al-Kashshāf* in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* can be understood at least in part as a consequence of al-Ghawrī's efforts to present himself as both a learned man who had to be familiar with such an important work as *al-Kashshāf* and as a pious sultan who could not accept the spread of Muʿtazilī teachings in his salons.[807]

In sum, we note that the members of the sultan's court were familiar with and used the standard exegetical works of their time from various parts of the Islamicate world, thus underlining that the members of the sultan's salons were in conversation both with the broader context of Mamluk scholarship and with the learned culture of the Islamicate world at large. Yet, they did not simply accept these widely respected standard works without criticism, rather, they evaluated them in light of their own scholarly, religious, and political identities. What was at stake in these re-assessments of earlier scholarly works is vividly illustrated by the discussions about the status of al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. In this case, the discussions resulted in a hiatus in the holding of the *majālis*, a hiatus that posed a serious threat to the social status of their participants. Far from being idle mental exercises, discussions about *tafsīr* questions could, evidently, have far-reaching real-life consequences.

4.2.3 *Creed and Rational Theology*

Questions pertaining to the fields of Islamic creed (*ʿaqīda*) and to the kind of theology known as *kalām* figured prominently in the sultan's salons. Whereas

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805   Lane, *Commentary* xxii.
806   Ullah, *Exegesis* 2.
807   We do not know whether *al-Kashshāf* was ever quoted or referred to in the salons again, after the incident analyzed here.

ʿaqīda works usually provide their readers with only limited argumentative proofs for the fundamental religious doctrines they list,[808] dialectical argumentation is an important characteristic of the kind of theology known as *kalām*,[809] with the fundamentals of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) constituting its main field of rational inquiry.[810] In the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is not always possible to distinguish between these closely interrelated fields of knowledge, especially since the authors of our source texts and the participants in the sultan's salons do not seem to have perceived them as separate disciplines. Therefore, the present section deals at the same time with both of these fields, which together account for 10 percent of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and 8 percent of those of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

Frequently discussed issues of *ʿaqīda* and *kalām* included the concept of faith (*īmān*), God's attributes (*ṣifāt*), and eschatology, which are analyzed separately in later chapters because of their significance to religious life at al-Ghawrī's court and to our understanding of the still largely neglected field of Muslim theological thought in the late middle period.[811] However, several less often debated questions are equally deserving of scholarly attention. Among these, the controversy concerning al-Ghazālī's teaching of the best of all possible worlds is a promising starting point for our analysis of how the sultan and his court society dealt with such complex themes.

The controversy began, according to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, with the following question by an unnamed participant:

> **Question:** "If our Prophet Muḥammad—God bless him and grant him salvation—had lived longer than he did, even for [only] ten years, would this have increased his eminence and his rank or not?"[812]

Initially, this question does not appear to relate to any of the major theological controversies of the late middle period. The unnamed person replying to it, however, understood its broader implications.

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808   Hoover, Creed.

809   Here I follow Griffel, Kommentar, in Ibn Rushd, *Abhandlung*, trans. Griffel 64; Sabra, Science 5; Thiele, Scholarship 224, in understanding *kalām* as constituting a specific kind of Islamic theology and not theological thought in Islam as a whole. On *kalām* as a scholarly discipline, see Frank, Science; Eichner, *Tradition* 142–3, 153–225, 275–341; and on its relationship with *ʿaqīda*, see Eichner, *Tradition* 330–4.

810   Frank, *Kalām* and Philosophy 72. See also Sabra, Science 5–11.

811   See sections 5.1.4.1 and 5.1.4.2 below. On the issue of Muslim theology in the middle period being little-studied, cf. Bori, Theology 62. See also Eichner, Handbooks 494–5.

812   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 259.

Answer: Al-Ghazālī said (*qāla*): "Nothing can be added to his perfection and it is not possible that he should have lived a single day longer. For God Most High already knew that [the Prophet] was at the highest level of perfection and nobility. If something better than [his perfection] were possible, then it would have been like this [better state]. Everything is as perfect as possible, [its perfection] cannot increase or decrease and nothing in possibility is any more amazing (*abdaʿ*) than that which [already] is."[813]

In his answer, the participant linked the problem to a teaching that in later Sunni Islam was invariably associated with the name of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and which we must review here in some detail to understand the full significance of the passage. According to this teaching, the Prophet Muḥammad could not have lived longer than he did, because God knew that his actual life span was the best of all possible options. If there had been a better option, God would have realized it. This applies to the life span of the Prophet, but also to all other created things, since there is, in possibility, nothing more amazing (*abdaʿ*) than what already exists in the present world.

Al-Ghazālī's articulation of this teaching of the best of all possible worlds has received considerable scholarly attention over the past decades.[814] He discussed this teaching in several places in his oeuvre,[815] including in the following passage of his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Revivification of the religious sciences):[816]

Everything which God apportions to man, such as sustenance, life-span, pleasure and pain, capacity and incapacity, belief and disbelief, obedience and sin, is all of sheer justice (*ʿadl*), with no injustice (*jawr*) in it; and pure right (*ḥaqq*), with no wrong (*ẓulm*) in it. Indeed, it is according to the necessarily right order, in accord with what must be and as it must be and in the measure in which it must be; and there is not in possibility anything whatever more excellent (*aṣlā*), more perfect (*akmal*), and more complete (*atamm*) than it. For if there were and He had withheld it,

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813   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 259.

814   E.g., Ormsby, *Theodicy*; Griffel, *Theology* 225–34, 273, 280–1; Frank, *Creation* 60–8; Ogden, *Problems*.

815   For relevant passages, see Ormsby, *Theodicy* 35–7.

816   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 35, 38. Al-Ghawrī's library included at least one partial copy of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, see MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1452 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 14; Ohta, Bindings 218; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 102; Flemming, Activities 254).

having power to create it but not deigning to do so, this would be miserliness contrary to the divine generosity and injustice contrary to the divine justice. But if He were not able, it would be incapability contrary to divinity.[817]

Al-Ghazālī argues that one must trust that everything—including the life span of humans—is right and just the way it is. It is not possible for anything in the world to be surpassed by more excellent alternatives. If there existed a more perfect alternative, God would have created it, for if He had not created it, despite His ability to do so, this would be in conflict with His generosity and justice. However, if there were a more perfect alternative that God was not able to create, then this would contradict His omnipotence.[818]

In the passage cited, al-Ghazālī refers to the problem of the life span of humans beings, but does not deal with the particular case of the Prophet Muḥammad. Neither did he address this specific case in any other work known to include his teaching on the best of all possible worlds. Thus, the passage introduced in the *majālis* by "*qāla al-Ghazālī*" is not a quotation from a work by al-Ghazālī, with the partial exception of the last sentence. The formula "nothing in possibility could be any more amazing (*abdaʿ*) than that which [already] is" was coined by later authors to summarize al-Ghazālī's position and constitutes a rephrasing of a similar sentence from al-Ghazālī's *al-Imlāʾ fī mushkilāt al-Iḥyāʾ* (Dictation on problematic passages in the *Iḥyāʾ*).[819]

Thus, one might dismiss the passage that purports to present al-Ghazālī's point of view as spurious and as evidence that the *majālis* participants were not able to distinguish a real quotation from al-Ghazālī from a false one. However, it might be more helpful to adopt a different understanding to fully grasp the intellectual project to which the members of al-Ghawrī's salon subscribed. Accordingly, the passage quoted is the product of an independent act of thinking that applies al-Ghazālī's general theological teachings to a specific problem that he did not, in fact, discuss. That is, the passage may equally well be a new adaption of al-Ghazālī's original argument rather than a falsely attributed quotation, especially since it does not conflict with the theologian's teachings in any way. In light of this interpretation, a more accurate translation might render "*qāla al-Ghazālī*" that introduces this passage as "al-Ghazālī would have said."

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817 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ* iv, 223; trans. Ormsby, *Theodicy* 39. On this passage and its context, see also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 38–81.

818 Cf. for the last sentence, Ormsby, *Theodicy* 62.

819 Ormsby, *Theodicy* 35, 37.

The discussion of the question regarding whether the Prophet could have lived longer does not end with the argument cited above, but continues as follows:

> Al-Biqāʿī said (*qāla*): "This belongs to the principles (*qawāʿid*) of *falsafa*, because [God's] power is [surely] capable (*ṣāliḥa*) of doing this and He, Most High, is indeed able to create a world that is better than the one existing now. We say in reply [to what has been said]: If one applies al-Ghazālī's doctrine that nothing in possibility is any more amazing (*abdaʿ*) than that which is [already] in the knowledge of Him Most High, it is [indeed] like this and His knowledge does not change. If one applies it not to [His] eternal knowledge [but to something else], then [His] power is capable of everything."[820]

The objection voiced here against al-Ghazālī's position was a part of a major theological debate that reverberated for centuries. Eric Ormsby identified twenty-six authors who contributed to it to a noteworthy degree and seventeen treatises or comprehensive written discussions devoted to it, with the last of them dating to the thirteenth/nineteenth century.[821] Nevertheless, the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries were the heyday of the controversy.[822] Al-Ghazālī's critics raised three major objections to his doctrine. First, they said that it seems to suggest that God's power is limited, as He cannot create anything more amazing than what already exists. This could be understood as compromising His omnipotence. Second, they argued that al-Ghazālī apparently sided with the teaching of the group of philosophers known as the *falāsifa*,[823] who claimed that God did not create the world in its present form by His free will, but was forced to do so because of His essence. Third, they suggested that al-Ghazālī's teaching could be considered dangerously close to the Muʿtazilī doctrine of *al-aṣlaḥ*, which was generally rejected by Sunni Muslims. According to this Muʿtazilī doctrine, God is obliged by His justice to furnish humans with what is most proper (*aṣlaḥ*) to them.[824]

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820   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 259–60.

821   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 32, 94.

822   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 114. On al-Suyūṭī's view on the issue, cf. al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 96ʳ–97ᵛ.

823   On this term and its derivations in the context of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see section 4.2.8 below.

824   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 32–4. On these arguments in detail, see Ormsby, *Theodicy* 81, 217–58 (on *al-aṣlaḥ*); 81–8, 135–216. On the relevant Muʿtazilī teachings, see also Ogden, *Problems* 60–7.

Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480) was a particularly out-spoken opponent of this teaching of al-Ghazālī and he upheld all three of the above mentioned arguments.[825] He laid out his criticism in a small and so far unedited treatise entitled *Tahdīm al-arkān min laysa fī l-imkān abdaʿ mimmā kān* (Tearing down the pillars [of the statement] that there is in possibility nothing more amazing than what is). Since no complete outline of this work is presently available in the scholarly literature, it is appropriate to include a summary of its contents here.[826]

In the beginning of his text, al-Biqāʿī asks for God's help to refute the statement made by "certain *falāsifa*,"[827] that there could not be anything more amazing than what we can observe in the world around us. In particular, he takes issue with the teaching that God did not create the world as an act of His free will (*bi-ikhtiyār*), but because of His essence (*bi-l-dhāt*)—a teaching that he considers to be related to the *falāsifa*'s position that God does not know the particulars (*juzʾiyyāt*) and that the world is eternal.[828] Moreover, he takes up the argument described above, according to which the teaching of the best of all possible worlds is related to the Muʿtazilī doctrine of *al-aṣlaḥ*.[829] Al-Biqāʿī then explains that, according to reliable traditions, even such a revered scholar as al-Ghazālī is not immune from committing a lapse (*zalla*).[830] After faithfully quoting the passages that pertain to al-Ghazālī's teaching from the latter's *al-Jawāhir al-arbaʿīn* (The forty jewels), *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, and *al-Imlāʾ fī mushkilāt al-Iḥyāʾ*,[831] al-Biqāʿī hints at the possibility that these passages were inserted into al-Ghazālī's books by someone else.[832]

At the beginning of the main part of his treatise, al-Biqāʿī explains that the doctrine that God could not create a world more amazing than the existing one entails the claim that God is unable to create a more perfect world, and from this it follows that the creation of something even more amazing is impossible (*muḥāl*) and beyond God's power (*qudra*). Al-Biqāʿī rejects this position and

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825 Ormsby, *Theodicy* 116. On his biography and work, see Saleh, *Defense* 7–24; Ormsby, *Theodicy* 32, 113, 115–6; Guo, Chronicle.

826 The following synopsis is based on ᴍꜱ New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Landberg Arabic 156.

827 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fol. 1ᵛ.

828 See below on the particular status of these teachings in the Sunni criticism of *falsafa*.

829 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ. See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 217.

830 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fol. 2ʳ. See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 217.

831 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 2ʳ–3ᵛ.

832 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 3ᵛ–4ʳ. On the authenticity of the passages, see Ormsby, *Theodicy* 88–91.

maintains that it is possible for God to do exactly this. For example, if He wanted to, God could create all humanity as a single believing religious community (*umma*).[833]

To lend further credibility to his position, al-Biqāʿī emphasizes that he is not the first scholar to find fault with al-Ghazālī's teachings and presents a long list of points on which other scholars have objected and accused him of introducing innovations (sg. *bidʿa*).[834] Al-Biqāʿī then returns to al-Ghazālī's teaching of the best of all possible worlds and states that God could easily create a more grand (*aʿẓam*) world if He wanted to. Moreover, changes that occur in this world and alter it for the better demonstrate that what had existed before could still be improved. Al-Biqāʿī suggests that God could, for example, have all humans believe in the prophets sent to them,[835] make them as beautiful as Joseph,[836] or enable them to understand the language of birds and animals, as David and Solomon did.[837] According to al-Biqāʿī, all of this would make the world a more perfect place.[838]

After this general refutation, al-Biqāʿī turns his attention to specific statements in al-Ghazālī's works.[839] Among these, he rejects, inter alia, al-Ghazālī's statement that all caused things are in the most perfect state and that they cannot be improved. In al-Biqāʿī's understanding, this would mean that we should simply let unbelievers (sg. *kāfir*) be unbelievers and rebels against God (sg. *ʿāṣin*) be rebels, for God created them this way, which is the most perfect way for them. Here, al-Biqāʿī strongly objects, as such a behavior would be clearly opposed to the commandments of God and his Prophet, who ordered that all humans should be called upon to accept Islam.[840] Moreover, al-Biqāʿī sees in al-Ghazālī's position an attack on God's omnipotence, as it implies that God cannot create a more perfect world. Consequently, al-Biqāʿī adduces arguments from famous works of *kalām* and *tafsīr*—works such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's comprehensive Quran commentary and al-Ījī's *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* (The book of the stations)—to prove that God is indeed omnipotent.[841] In this context, al-Biqāʿī brings up another point, namely, that contrary to the teachings of the

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833   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fol. 4ᵛ.

834   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 4ᵛ–12ᵛ. See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 115.

835   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fol. 15ʳ.

836   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 16ʳ–16ᵛ.

837   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fol. 17ᵛ.

838   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 12ʳ–20ᵛ. See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 115–6, 135–48, 158–60.

839   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 20ᵛ–26ᵛ.

840   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 20ʳ–20ᵛ.

841   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 20ᵛ–21ʳ. On al-Ījī's *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, see further below in this section.

falāsifa, the world is created in time (*ḥādith*) and that God was never not able to create it, rather He decided to bring it into being at a specific point in time through a decision of His free will (*ikhtiyār*).[842] After addressing certain *ḥadīth*s that relate to God's omnipotence,[843] al-Biqāʿī ends his treatise with a short epilogue.[844]

The statement about the best of all possible worlds attributed to al-Biqāʿī in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* fits very well with his stance on this problem in *Tahdīm al-arkān*. In al-Biqāʿī's view, God could have made the world more amazing than it is by postponing the Prophet's death. However, al-Biqāʿī does not address this particular question anywhere in his treatise, nor did he make a statement that corresponds to the one found in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. While we cannot completely rule out the possibility that al-Biqāʿī's statement may be quoted from a different work,[845] it is plausible to assume that, as in the case of al-Ghazālī, a participant of the *majālis* applied what he knew about al-Biqāʿī's opinion to the new question and gave a reply that conformed to the spirit of al-Biqāʿī's teaching, but did not quote him directly.

The accusation that al-Ghazālī secretly sided with the *falāsifa* demonstrates that the unnamed interlocutor had internalized al-Biqāʿī's position. Al-Ghazālī's fame as an Islamic theologian rested, to a considerable extent, on his engagement with and critical review of the teachings of the *falāsifa*. His *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (The intentions of the *falāsifa*) offered a neutral overview of key teachings of the *falāsifa* and was based on a work by Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037).[846] But al-Ghazālī did not just recapitulate the *falāsifa*'s teachings. In his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (The incoherence of the *falāsifa*), he dealt with the claims that their positions were based on demonstrative proofs (sg. *burhān*) and thus could not be refuted on logical grounds. Yet, al-Ghazālī pointed out that their arguments fell short of the requirements that they themselves had set for demonstrative proofs, even if the views they tried to prove might actually be correct. Moreover, al-Ghazālī singled out three teachings that he considered irreconcilable with revelation and that he therefore deemed to be unbelief

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842   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 23ʳ–24ʳ.

843   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 24ʳ–26ᵛ.

844   Al-Biqāʿī, *Tahdīm* fols. 26ᵛ–27ʳ.

845   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 115, mentions a second work of al-Biqāʿī by the title of *Dalālat al-burhān ʿalā anna al-imkān abdaʿ mimmā kān* that also addresses the question of the best of all possible worlds, but considers it a mere "recapitulation" of *Tahdīm al-arkān*.

846   Griffel, Unknown Work 11. On this text, see also, e.g., Shihadeh, Light; Reynolds, Odyssey; Griffel, *Theology* 98; Griffel, Theology Engages 436. On a second summary of the teachings of the *falāsifa* by al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, Unknown Work; Griffel, *Theology* 97–8.

(*kufr*): the *falāsifa*'s positions that the world was eternal, that God did not know particulars, and that there was no bodily resurrection. Apart from these three teachings, two of which also appear in al-Biqāʿī's treatise, the *falāsifa* might be wrong on specific questions, but in al-Ghazālī's view, their doctrines did not place them in opposition to Islam to the extent that they deserved punishment.[847] What is more, al-Ghazālī emphasized that the teachings of the *falāsifa* on logic were indeed correct.[848] Therefore, Muslim scholars could and should make use of what the *falāsifa* taught, in particular with regard to syllogistic logic, just as al-Ghazālī himself did.[849]

Al-Ghazālī's qualified acceptance of some of the *falāsifa*'s teachings appeared problematic to numerous later scholars.[850] Al-Biqāʿī obviously belonged to this group and tried to link al-Ghazālī as closely as possible to the *falāsifa*, whose mere name had become anathema to Sunni scholars in the late middle period.[851] To this purpose, al-Biqāʿī claimed that al-Ghazālī's teaching of the best of all possible worlds was related to the *falāsifa*'s claim that God was ignorant of particulars and that the world was eternal—two of the teachings that al-Ghazālī had explicitly declared unbelief.[852] Yet, his attempts to show that al-Ghazālī had sided with the *falāsifa* constituted not only a particularly important element of al-Biqāʿī's polemic against the earlier theologian, but are also reflected in the passage from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* cited above, which dismisses al-Ghazālī's position as belonging to "the principles of *falsafa*."

Thus, we see that the positions the text associates with al-Ghazālī and al-Biqāʿī are in accord with these two scholars' original teachings. Taken together, the exchange of opinions in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* can be understood as a well-reasoned and considered contribution to an important theological debate that stimulated the thought of many *ʿulamāʾ* during the late middle and early mod-

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847   Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut* 3–4, 230; Griffel, *Apostasie* 268–9, 272, 274–8; Griffel, *Theology* 5, 97–103. See also Griffel, *Apostasie* 268–81; Griffel, *Theology* 97–173; Griffel, Killing 220–3; Griffel, Theology Engages 437–46; and for al-Ghazālī's understanding of demonstrative reasoning, see Marmura, Science.

848   Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut* 9. See also Shihadeh, Light 77; Shihadeh, Developments 144–8; El-Rouayheb, *History* 117; Günther, Principles 21, 27; Rudolph, Neubewertung; Rudolph, Concept 40–5; Marmura, Science 183; and on the later impact of his teachings, see El-Rouayheb, Scholars, *passim*.

849   Griffel, *Theology* 7. See also Griffel, *Theology* 98; Griffel, Theology Engages 436–8; Griffel, *Apostasie* 10, 309, 321, 324–5, 331–2 (on al-Ghazālī's adoption of philosophical teachings).

850   Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* vi, 253–4; Reynolds, Odyssey 37.

851   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 143–4. On this point, see also section 4.2.8 below.

852   See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 144, 184–5.

ern periods. It is no exaggeration to say that the issue of the best of all possible worlds was a key topic in Muslim theologial thought in the late middle period. Its presence in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* demonstrates that the members of the sultan's salons were familiar with the debate about one of most contested theologial questions of their time.

Yet, in their discussion of whether the Prophet could have lived longer than he did, the participants of al-Ghawrī's salons did not just mindlessly repeat the teachings of earlier authorities or recapitulate previous stages of the debate as a demonstration of their erudition. Rather, they applied their theological knowledge to a new question and thus demonstrated that they were able to make meaningful contributions to the scholarly communication of their time. It is telling that they thereby referred to earlier authorities whose names were of emblematic significance for the identification of the two sides in the debate, but that these references did not prevent them from making innovative contributions of their own. Our findings suggest that the members of al-Ghawrī's circle developed their ideas in dialogue with the earlier scholarly heritage of Islamicate thought, but did not hesitate to add new elements when they felt that what they had to say was meaningful.

Unfortunately, the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* did not indicate clearly which point of view in the sultan's *majlis* met with the attendees' general approval. However, three arguments indicate that the position associated with al-Biqāʿī was shared by at least some participants of the *majālis*. First, it appears uncontested at the end of the passage on the issue of the best of all possible worlds. Second, as seen above, the participants of the *majālis*, and here especially al-Ghawrī, sought to avoid any impression that they sided with strands of Islamic thought considered deviant by Sunni Muslims of their time, such as Muʿtazilism. Therefore, objections to a certain doctrine because it was thought to belong to the teachings of the *falāsifa* might have been well-received by the members of al-Ghawrī's circle. Third, the focus on God's omnipotence in the position associated with al-Biqāʿī aligns well with other theological statements in our sources.

In this context, the question immediately preceding the one about the best of all possible worlds in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is particularly noteworthy. It states: "Are the actions (*afʿāl*) of God Most High ending (*muntāhiya*) or not?"[853] After presenting possible answers to this question, the account of this debate concludes with a quotation from an important *kalām* work:

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853   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 258.

In the Commentary on the Stations (*Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*) [the author] said: "The power of Him Most High is not characterized by limitedness (*bi-l-tanāhī*), neither with regard to essence nor with regard to things connected [to Him] (*taʿalluqan*).[854] As for 'with regard to essence': Because limitedness is among the characteristics of quantity and [His essence] is not a quantity, then, since [His] power is in accordance with its essence in terms of [its] quality, limitedness is denied in relation to it. [The fact] that limitedness is denied in relation to Him [also] with regard to things connected [to Him] confirms that He is not limited at all. 'Not being limited' means that His connection does not stop at a certain terminal point (*ḥadd*) [such that] He cannot connect with anything else, that is, with something that is beyond this point."[855]

The emphasis of this passage on the unlimitedness of God's power corresponds to the point of view introduced as that of al-Biqāʿī, namely, that God is able to create everything He wants to create. This correspondence suggests that these two consecutive accounts of discussions about theological issues in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* should be read together as an affirmation of God's omnipotence, just from two different angles.

Apart from its content, the passage quoted from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is also interesting in terms of its source. As the author indicates, it is from a work he calls *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, that is, the commentary by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413)[856] on ʿAḍud al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Ījī's (d. 756/1355)[857] *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām* (Book of the stations on the science of *kalām*). Al-Ījī's *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* constitutes a summa of Sunni *kalām* according to the school of Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935).[858] Al-Ījī arranged the theological knowledge of his time in six parts or stations (*mawāqif*), dealing with (1) premises (*muqaddamāt*), (2) common matters (*umūr ʿāmma*), (3) accidents (*aʿrāḍ*), (4) substances (*jawāhir*), (5) theological matters (*ilāhiyyāt*), and (6) matters of revelation (*samʿiyyāt*).[859] The

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854   On *taʿalluq*, see Ormsby, *Theodicy* 151–2.

855   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 259, quoting al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 86–7.

856   On al-Jurjānī's biography, see van Ess, *Träume*.

857   On his biography, see van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 1–6; and on his influence on the development of the Ashʿariyya, see Spevack, Egypt 538.

858   Eichner, Dissolving 181. On the history of the later Ashʿariyya in Egypt, see Spevack, Egypt.

859   Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 27. On this work, see also Eichner, Dissolving 181–3, 188–90; Eichner, *Tradition* 317–24, 425–70; El-Bizri, God 136; Sabra, Science 13–7, 24; van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, esp. 7–12; Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 165–9; Würtz, *Theologie* 68–72.

most celebrated of the many commentaries on *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* was that of al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, which quoted the text of the original work in its entirety.[860]

References to al-Ījī's work and al-Jurjānī's commentary were a recurring feature in the theological debates of the *majālis*, inter alia with regard to the question of the unlimitedness of God's power, epistemological issues,[861] the difference between the miracles of prophets and those of the friends of God,[862] or the properties of faith.[863] This omnipresence of *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* and its *Sharḥ* is not surprising, given that it was among a small group of works that "stood at the center of philosophical and theological instruction in Islam between the fifteenth up until the twentieth centuries."[864] The success of *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* and al-Jurjānī's commentary on it bridged centuries as well as continents. Written originally in eighth-/fourteenth-century Iran, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* together with al-Jurjānī's commentary served as the basis for the highest level of *kalām* education in early modern India,[865] was part of the *medrese* curriculum in Istanbul during the tenth/sixteenth century,[866] became the subject of numerous supercommentaries by Ottoman scholars,[867] and serves as a textbook at al-Azhar University in Cairo up to the present day.[868]

The only author who could compete with al-Ījī for the position as the most influential authority on theological matters in the *majālis* was his student and al-Jurjānī's rival, Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390).[869] Al-Taftāzānī penned two theological works that found particular favor with the members of salons: his comprehensive theological textbook *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*

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860   Sabra, Science 14–5. On the commentary, see also van Ess, *Träume* 24, 39, 42, 44, 60, 95; Eichner, Dissolving 183, 195.

861   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 258, quoting al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 163.

862   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 117–8, quoting al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 343.

863   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71, quoting al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 542–3. See section 5.1.4.2 for a detailed analysis of the debates on this topic; and appendix 1 for a list of quotations from *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*.

864   Griffel, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī 344. See also Eichner, Handbooks 494–5.

865   Malik, *Gelehrtenkultur* 130. See also Malik, *Gelehrtenkultur* 130, 286, 529, 540; Robinson, Knowledge 183.

866   Robinson, Knowledge 177. On its presence in the contemporaneous Ottoman palace library, see Atçıl, Section 368, 370, 372, 376.

867   Van Ess, *Träume* 99, 122.

868   Sabra, Science 17.

869   On his relationship with al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī see van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 6; van Ess, *Träume* 35–8, 98–9.

(Commentary on the Intentions), which constitutes a commentary on his own work *Maqāṣid al-ṭālibīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Intentions of the students of the fundamentals of religion),[870] and his commentary on Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Nasafī's (d. 537/1142) *ʿAqāʾid* (Articles of faith).

The participants in the *majālis* associated al-Taftāzānī so much with his *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* that he was known to them as "the commentator on the *Maqāṣid*."[871] They referred to the *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* to explain theological concepts such as divine guidance (*hidāya*)[872] and the increase and decrease of faith.[873] Al-Taftāzānī's much shorter *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* was used even more on issues such as faith and free will,[874] the persistence of faith,[875] and the causes of human knowledge.[876] Again, the disputants' reliance on these works is not surprising, as both belonged to the standard Sunni theological literature of the late middle period onward. Dozens of scholars composed supercommentaries, super-supercommentaries, and super-super-supercommentaries on *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.[877] The same work also appears as part of *medrese* curricula in tenth-/sixteenth-century Istanbul,[878] was taught in fourteenth-/twentieth-century India,[879] and was used at al-Azhar University up to 1961.[880] *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* continues to influence Sunni theological thought to the present day, as is attested by its ongoing use as an advanced textbook at al-Azhar University, more than 600 years after its introduction there.[881]

When referring to books such as *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*, or *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* had not made arbitrary choices from among the theological works available to them. Rather, they

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870   Wisnovsky, Nature 178.

871   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 128; (ed. ʿAzzām) 41.

872   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 283, quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* iv, 309.

873   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71, quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 211. See section 4.1.2.2 on this passage.

874   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 126–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 40, quoting multiple passages from al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117. See section 4.1.2.2 for an analysis of these passages.

875   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 127–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 40–1, referring to al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 112–3.

876   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 277, quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 23.

877   Wisnovsky, Nature 180–2.

878   Robinson, Knowledge 176. On its presence in the Ottoman palace library, see Atçıl, Section 368, 370, 380.

879   Malik, *Gelehrtenkultur* 345–6. See also Malik, *Gelehrtenkultur* 528, 533, 540.

880   Würtz, Conception 470; Würtz, *Theologie* 61. On this work, see Würtz, *Theologie* 57–62; and on the impact of al-Taftāzānī's writings in Egypt, see Spevack, Egypt 536–7.

881   Würtz, Conception 470. On this work, see Würtz, *Theologie* 62–81; and on its presence in the Ottoman palace library, see Atçıl, Section 370, 376.

showed that they were familiar with some of the most important and up-to-date scholarly works of their time. This observation is even more important as current scholarship erroneously assumes that theological works by al-Jurjānī and al-Taftāzānī, with their focus on rational argumentation, were fundamental for contemporaneous Ottoman, but not for Mamluk theological debates.[882] Furthermore, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* and *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* were by no means works for beginners, or amateurs. In late Mamluk times, these were standard scholarly state-of-the-art works in the highly specialized discipline of *kalām*. The way these books are employed in the discussions that took place during the *majālis*, however, shows that at least some of the members of al-Ghawrī's salons had a firm grasp of their contents and could employ them to make well-founded contributions to the discussions dominating the scholarly debates of their time.[883]

4.2.4 *Stories of the Prophets before Muḥammad*

Narratives about those God sent, according to Islam, as prophets before Muḥammad are known in Arabic literature as *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*,[884] a designation often translated as "stories of the prophets." Using Quranic material about these prophets as starting points,[885] *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* developed into a full-fledged literary genre in Arabic and other Islamicate languages.[886]

Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ material figures prominently in all the main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, making up 9 percent of the content of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and 7 percent of that of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. The case of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is special, in so far as the 8 percent of its content that deals with *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* is found almost exclusively in its historical section, about the time before Muḥammad's birth. This points to the fact that *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material, despite constituting a field of knowledge of its own, is often closely connected to and at times even integrated into other disciplines of Islamicate learning.[887]

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882 Göktaş, Collection 313.

883 It would be worthwhile to compare the questions debated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* to those discussed in Aḥmad b. ʿImād al-Dīn al-Aqfahsī al-Miṣrī's famous *Kashf al-asrār ʿammā khafyia ʿan al-afkār*, of which al-Ghawrī's library included a copy preserved as MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1621 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 197; Flemming, Activities 254).

884 For other definitions of this genre, see, e.g., Pauliny, Bemerkungen 111; Pauliny, Werk 201; Nagel, Ḳiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ 180; Firestone, Prophets 644; Brinner, Legends 465.

885 On this Quranic material, see, e.g., Pauliny, Bemerkungen 115–6; Tottoli, *Prophets* 3–16; Norris, Elements; Rubin, Prophets 301–2; Schwarzbaum, *Legends* 10–20.

886 On this literary genre, see Pauliny, Bemerkungen; Tottoli, Sources; Tottoli, *Prophets*; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ*.

887 Tottoli, *Prophets* 84.

Accounts about events centering on the prophets before Muḥammad make up a significant part of the premodern Islamic vision of early history.[888] This also holds true for our main sources, which—apart from referring to pre-Islamic Iranian kings[889] and a few stray remarks on famous pre-Islamic Arabs[890]— primarily feature material on prophetic figures in relation to events predating Muḥammad's life. As for Quranic exegesis,[891] we have seen that accounts about ancient prophets could provoke heated debates in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as in the case of Joseph's brothers. Given that references to prophets are a common feature of the Quranic text, it is not surprising that numerous other exegetical conversations in the *majālis* addressed pertinent passages, too.[892] The present study considers such debates as falling within the domain of Quranic exegesis when they center primarily on the Quranic text and as belonging to the field of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* when other, extra-Quranic material predominates. Finally, material about the prophets before Muḥammad also plays a significant role in traditions attributed to Muḥammad,[893] some of which appear in the *majālis* accounts as well.[894]

Despite these close connections to other disciplines, our sources clearly indicate that the members of the sultan's court society viewed *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*

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888 Tottoli, *Prophets* 133. On the connection between *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and history, see also Tottoli, *Prophets* 128–37; Nagel, Ḳiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ 180; Berkey, *Preaching* 40; Rubin, Prophets 303–4; Firestone, Prophets 645; Schwarzbaum, *Legends* 39–45; Brinner, Legends 465–6; Brinner, Introduction, in al-Thaʿlabī, *Lives* xi–xii; Khalidi, *Thought* 73; Thackston, Introduction, in al-Kisāʾī, *Tales* xv–xvi; Adang, *Writers* 15–6.

889 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 90; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 86ʳ– 86ᵛ; ii, fols. 16ʳ, 38ʳ.

890 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 90; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 51ᵛ.

891 On the connection between *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and Quranic exegesis, see Pauliny, Bemerkungen 121; Tottoli, *Prophets* 97–109; Nagel, Ḳiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ 180; Berkey, *Preaching* 40; Calder, Tafsīr 106–7, 116–8, 125, 127; Gilliot, Exegesis 107; McAuliffe, Assessing 358–60; Rippin, Tafsīr (*EI²*) 84–6; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 8, 16–21, 30–1, 71–2; Firestone, Prophets 644–5; Schwarzbaum, *Legends* 23–8; Brinner, Legends 465–6; Heath, Volksliteratur 431; Brinner, Introduction, in al-Thaʿlabī, *Lives* xi–xii; Thackston, Mythologie 187; Khalidi, *Thought* 70, 72; Thackston, Introduction, in al-Kisāʾī, *Tales* xv–xvi; Pauliny, Rolle 138–40; Adang, *Writers* 13–4.

892 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 92, 96–100, 104, 110, 131–3, 140–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 31–2; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 5ᵛ–6ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 36–7, 176–8, 206–7, 223; (ed. ʿAzzām) 91–2.

893 Tottoli, *Prophets* 111. On the connection between *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and *ḥadīth* material, see also Pauliny, Bemerkungen 121; Tottoli, *Prophets* 110–27; Berkey, *Preaching* 5, 40; Rubin, Prophets 302–3; Firestone, Prophets 645; Schwarzbaum, *Legends* 29–38; Brinner, Legends 465; Brinner, Introduction, in al-Thaʿlabī, *Lives* xvii–xviii, xxiii; Pauliny, Rolle 136–8; Adang, *Writers* 13–4.

894 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 184–5; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 116, 276–7.

as a separate field of learning. First, in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the section on *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* at the beginning of the work is clearly separated from the rest of the text, suggesting that this type of material was perceived as sui generis. Second, texts belonging to the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* genre are clearly the predominant sources of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material in the *majālis* accounts, as we see below. This indicates that members of the sultan's court society were familiar with the literary genre of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and took their information about the prophets before Muḥammad from this kind of literature. Third—and most importantly—, according to our sources, when discussing the lives of the prophets predating Muḥammad, the attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* repeatedly referred to their topic of debate as belonging to the field of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*.[895]

For our understanding of the significance of discussions about *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the broader context of this field. Its beginnings are connected to the social group of the early *quṣṣāṣ* (sg. *qāṣṣ* or *qaṣṣāṣ*) or "storytellers," who, in addition to narrating stories about the ancient prophets, also often functioned as prayer leaders, Quran readers, and transmitters of information about Muḥammad. Many early *quṣṣāṣ* combined the religious knowledge necessary for these tasks with their ability to recount religious stories in ways that appealed to people who lacked a thorough education. Possibly for this reason, their adversaries in the developing group of religious scholars accused them of uncritically disseminating uncorroborated information that did not meet academic standards and was not supported by divine revelation.[896]

Nevertheless, the activities of *quṣṣāṣ* and their colleagues known as *wuʿʿāẓ* (sg. *wāʿiẓ*) or preachers[897] continued to constitute an important and popular element in the religious life of most Muslim social groups during the late middle period.[898] Mamluk *quṣṣāṣ* and preachers shared in a lively, though not uncontested oral tradition about the prophets before Muḥammad.[899] In

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895   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 156; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 32ʳ–33ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 30, 225–6.

896   Tottoli, *Prophets* 86–7. See also, e.g., Brinner, Introduction, in al-Thaʿlabī, *Lives* xii–xiii; Thackston, Introduction, in al-Kisāʾī, *Tales* xiv–xv; Scheiner, Teachers; Armstrong, *Quṣṣāṣ*; Pauliny, Rolle; Berkey, *Preaching* 22–31; Goldziher, *Studien* ii, 158–73; ʿAthamina, Emergence; Pedersen, Preacher 231–7, 243–5, 249–51; Pedersen, Criticism.

897   On "*quṣṣāṣ*" and "*wuʿʿāẓ*" as largely synonymous in the middle period, see Berkey, *Preaching* 14. See also Pauliny, Rolle 130; Pedersen, Preacher; Armstrong, *Quṣṣāṣ* 4, 6, 8, 133–5, 282.

898   Berkey, *Preaching* 4, 9–11, 25–6.

899   Berkey, Storytelling 54–5; Berkey, *Preaching* 16–20, 24–5, 28–32, 40–1. See also Pedersen,

addition to this oral tradition, in the Mamluk period written works of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, such as the widely read collections of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), al-Kisāʾī (fl. fifth/eleventh century?), and al-Ṭarafī (d. 454/1062) were consumed alongside lesser-known, newly produced texts.[900] One of these newer collections was that of ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ b. Khalīl al-Malaṭī, *al-Qawl al-ḥazm fī kalām ʿalā l-anbiyāʾ ūlī l-ʿazm* (The resolute statement in the discourse about the prophets of determination), which its author included among his writings dedicated to al-Ghawrī.[901] Concomitantly, the Mamluk period also witnessed a new wave of criticism of the reading and writing of this kind of literature. This criticism focused particularly on the inclusion of material of a Jewish and Christian background.[902] This material, today often referred to collectively as *isrāʾīliyyāt*, not only constituted part of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* works, but also found entry into other fields of learning, such as Quranic exegesis.[903] Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Kathīr launched a vehement attack against what they perceived as the uncritical acceptance of the so-called *isrāʾīliyyāt* and argued that any material that lacked a reliable origin as documented by a valid chain of transmitters was inherently suspicious. In particular, material that appeared to be from a Jewish background should not be accepted unless authenticated by a genuinely Islamic source.[904]

The fact that in the late Mamluk period, a lively oral tradition of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* existed side-by-side with a rich literary genre featuring both famous and lesser-known works poses significant challenges to pinning down the sources of the knowledge of al-Ghawrī and his court on the lives of the ancient prophets. Did they listen to oral performances of *quṣṣāṣ* and later discuss what they had heard? Or did they rely on written texts? If so, did they use better known works, such as those by al-Thaʿlabī and al-Kisāʾī, or had less renowned collections caught their attention? Moreover, were they aware of and interested in the criticism leveled against the so-called *isrāʾīliyyāt*?

Al-Kawkab al-durrī and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* include passages indicating that the sultan and those around him gleaned their information on Joseph, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets at least partly from written texts. In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the account of a discussion about the length of Mary's pregnancy with

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Criticism 230; Armstrong, *Quṣṣāṣ* 3, 33–8; Berkey, Popular Culture 140; Bori, Theology 60; Katz, Performances 467, 470.

900   On these texts, see Tottoli, *Prophets* 138–64.

901   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 58ʳ–71ʳ. On this work, see Tottoli, Sources 536.

902   This definition of *isrāʾīliyyāt* builds on Tottoli, Origin 193.

903   Tottoli, Origin 193. See also Adang, *Writers* 8–10; Armstrong, *Quṣṣāṣ* 85, 88, 90–111.

904   Tottoli, *Prophets* 171–5. See also McAuliffe, Assessing 349–52, 360–1; Tottoli, Origin 201–10; Calder, Tafsīr 120–1, 124–6; Frenkel, *Culture* 20.

Jesus begins with the words: "His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: 'I saw (*raʾaytu*) in the stories of the prophets [...].'"[905] Similarly, several of al-Ghawrī's statements on ancient prophets in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are introduced with the phrase, "quoting from (*naqlan ʿan*) the stories of the prophets."[906] This strongly suggests that one or several written works of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* played a pivotal role in the engagement of al-Ghawrī's court with this kind of material, although we cannot rule out the possibility that oral traditions supplemented the written material.

To identify the written source or sources used in the context of the *majālis*, the works of ten authors have been compared to pertinent passages in the *majālis* accounts.[907] While individual motifs included in the *majālis* accounts feature in all of these texts, only two works exhibit a degree of overlap that clearly indicates an intertextual relationship with our sources on al-Ghawrī's salons: al-Kisāʾī's *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān al-Maʿarrī's (d. 557/1162) *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq fī ishārāt al-daqāʾiq.*

Above,[908] we saw that al-Kisāʾī's work is the source for at least a significant part of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* sections of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. The significance of this observation for our understanding of the learned life at al-Ghawrī's court remains to be discussed, especially since al-Kisāʾī's work exhibits several unusual characteristics. These begin already with the person of the author: We know almost nothing about him, not even his full name and date of death. His floruit is subject to debate, with many authors considering the fifth/eleventh century the most likely possibility.[909]

The picture is only marginally clearer for the history of al-Kisāʾī's work, which is known under various titles.[910] Its transmission appears to be extremely complex. Jan Pauliny notes: "Of the large number of preserved manuscripts, we

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905   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 30.

906   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ᵛ, 32ᵛ, 34ᵛ.

907   (1) ʿUmāra b. Wathīma al-Fārisī's (d. 289/902) *Kitāb Badʾ al-khalq wa-qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; (2) Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*; (3) Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī's (d. 346/957) *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*; (4) al-Kisāʾī's (fl. fifth/eleventh century?) *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; (5) al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035) *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; (6) Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī's (d. 454/1062) *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; (7) Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān al-Maʿarrī's (d. 557/1162) *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq fī ishārāt al-daqāʾiq*; (8) ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn Athīr's (d. 630/1233) *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*; (9) Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*; (10) ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ b. Khalīl al-Malaṭī's (d. 920/1514) *Tārīkh al-anbiyāʾ al-akābir wa-bayān ūlī l-ʿazm minhum.*

908   Cf. section 3.1.3.3 above.

909   Cf. Pauliny, Werk 195–6, 230–2. Tottoli, *Prophets* 152, suggests the third/ninth century as floruit; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 132–40, argues that al-Kisāʾī was most probably active around the year 600/1203–4.

910   Pauliny, Werk 227–30.

would hardly find two that would be congruent in terms of content and scope. Yes, we would even hardly find one and the same legend that would have found entry in identical form in even two manuscripts."[911] Later transmitters of the text seem to have rephrased, extended, added, and abbreviated significant portions of al-Kisāʾī's text, provided one assumes that this author brought a single version of his work into circulation.[912] Thus, it is difficult to give an outline of the contents of al-Kisāʾī's work beyond the general observation that the text begins with an account of the creation, continues with narratives about the prophets before Muḥammad and related events, and ends before Muḥammad's birth.[913]

Pauliny sees the reason for the textual instability of this work in its close connection to the practices of the *quṣṣāṣ*; he describes al-Kisāʾī's work as "a typical product of the 'story-tellers-literature,'"[914] with narrative material originating in *quṣṣāṣ* circles being included in the work and substantially shaping its form and character.[915] Unlike the work of a full-fledged scholar like al-Thaʿlabī, al-Kisāʾī's text pays little attention to the conventions of the learned community. It does not feature a single full *isnād* and its references to early authorities such as Kaʿb b. al-Aḥbār (d. ca. 32/652),[916] Wahb b. Munabbih (d. ca. 114/732),[917] or Ibn ʿAbbās[918] do not fulfill scholarly standards, especially as the same material may be attributed to one source, then elsewhere be ascribed to another person.[919]

Given the literary and narrative characteristics of his work and its often fantastic, enthralling, and amusing content, it seems clear that al-Kisāʾī's primary goal was to entertain a broad readership.[920] Indeed, his text was very widely read and transmitted; no other *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* work was more frequently

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911   Pauliny, Werk 201. See also Pauliny, Charakter 119–21; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 140–4; Nagel, al-Kisāʾī 176.

912   Pauliny, Werk 201, 223. See also Tottoli, *Prophets* 152–3. As Pauliny, Werk 211–7, shows, the 1922–3 edition by Isaac Eisenberg fails to properly take into account the peculiarities of the text. Therefore, the present study relies on al-Ṭāhir b. Sālma's recent edition.

913   Cf. Pauliny, Werk 251–77, for an attempt at a schematic outline of the contents of the work.

914   Pauliny, Werk 201.

915   Pauliny, Werk 207. See also Tottoli, *Prophets* 152; Nagel, Ḳiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ 180; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 148–9; Nagel, al-Kisāʾī 176; Berkey, *Preaching* 18; Pauliny, Rolle 129, 132–3.

916   On him, see Tottoli, *Prophets* 90–1; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 60–1; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 37.

917   On him, see Tottoli, *Prophets* 139; Pauliny, Werk 198–9; Pauliny, Bemerkungen 112–3; Tottoli, *Prophets* 138–41; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 61–8, 148–50; Firestone, Prophets 645; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 37; Brinner, Introduction, in al-Thaʿlabī, *Lives* xviii–xix; Adang, *Writers* 10–2; Khoury, *Wahb*.

918   Cf. for these references Pauliny, Werk 244–7. See also Tottoli, *Prophets* 154. On Ibn ʿAbbās and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material, see Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 56–9.

919   Pauliny, Werk 199–200, 250–1. See also Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 147.

920   Pauliny, Charakter 122–4; Pauliny, Werk 200. See also Pauliny, Charakter 107–8, 118–21;

copied in premodern times.[921] Although severely criticized by scholars,[922] al-Kisāʾī's collection was also popular in late Mamluk Syria and Egypt, as is attested by direct references to it in historiographical texts.[923]

In incorporating and discussing material from al-Kisāʾī's work, the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* thus directed their attention to a text that was widely available and well known in their time, but fell short of the standards of more critically minded scholars. Hence, unlike other disciplines such as *tafsīr* or *kalām*, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* constitutes a field in which the members of al-Ghawrī's court society engaged not primarily with standard scholarly works, but rather with a popular text that was at least as entertaining as it was edifying. This indicates that in *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* discussions, the entertainment element of the *majālis* came clearly to the fore.

By taking into account the second identifiable source for information about ancient prophets in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* we can add further nuance to this picture. Its identification poses some challenges, since *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* refers to it in more than a dozen instances simply as *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (The carnelians)[924] and does not provide information about its author, other than to call him *ṣāḥib al-ʿAqāʾiq* (the author of the carnelians).[925] The material quoted from this work is highly disparate and includes information on Adam,[926] Joseph,[927] Solomon,[928] Alexander,[929] and Muḥammad;[930] episodes from early Islamic history;[931] entertaining stories about criminals;[932] information about natural history;[933] the rewards for pious deeds;[934] and the definition of wisdom.[935]

Pauliny, Bemerkungen 117–9; Tottoli, *Prophets* 153–4; Brinner, Legends 466; Thackston, Introduction, in al-Kisāʾī, *Tales* xx, xxiv; Günther, People of the Scripture 37.

921 Pauliny, Werk 194. See Pauliny, Werk 217–27; Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ* 140–2 for the surviving manuscript material.

922 Pauliny, Werk 195.

923 Pauliny, Werk 220.

924 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 73, 141, 145, 191, 203, 207, 210–1, 233, 247–8, 256, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 77, 93, 95, 131, 135.

925 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141, 143, 145, 191, 203, 207, 210, 211, 233, 248, 256, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 77, 93, 95, 131, 135.

926 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141–2.

927 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 207, 256, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 93, 131, 135.

928 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 40–1, 247–8.

929 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248.

930 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 203.

931 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 191, 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 77.

932 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 210; (ed. ʿAzzām) 95.

933 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 145.

934 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 152, 233.

935 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 73.

In three instances, however, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* quotes the title in a slightly longer form, as *ʿAqāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* (The carnelians of truths),[936] which resembles the title *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq fī ishārāt al-daqāʾiq wa-jawāhir al-ḥaqāʾiq fī l-ishārāt al-ḥikāyāt wa-l-raqāʾiq* (The book of carnelians on pointers to implications and jewels of truths on pointers to stories and subtleties) of a work by a certain Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān b. al-Munajjim al-Maʿarrī (d. 557/1162) listed by Brockelmann.[937] Previous scholarship has almost entirely ignored this work, which remains unedited. Moreover, we do not know of a single complete copy of the text. For the present study, individual volumes held in Dublin, Leipzig, Paris, Hamburg, and Riyadh were scrutinized.[938]

It is unclear whether the five manuscripts examined include, when combined, the entire text of *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*. The Leipzig manuscript is in rather poor condition and seems to be incomplete at the end. Its contents overlap largely with those of the Dublin manuscript, which states that it contains the first part of the text.[939] The Riyadh manuscript seems to continue where the text of the Dublin manuscript breaks off. Thus, we can assume that these two manuscripts together represent the first two parts of the work. Thereafter, the picture becomes less clear. The colophon of the Paris manuscript indicates that it contains the fourth part of the work.[940] However, only the second half of its contents overlap with those of the Hamburg manuscript, which likewise claims to include the fourth part of the text.[941] While it is possible to reconcile this contradiction by assuming that the Paris manuscript includes also the third part—represented by its first half—together with the fourth part of the text corresponding to the contents of the Hamburg manuscript, no definite statement about the integrity of the text seems possible based on the manuscript witnesses examined. Moreover, Kātib Çelebi (d. 1068/1657) notes in *Kashf al-ẓunūn* (Examination of opinions) that *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* has been subject to interpolation (*ḥashw*); this raises further questions regarding its transmission history.[942]

Nevertheless, we can be certain that al-Maʿarrī's work is indeed the *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* referred to in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. In two cases, passages in the

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936   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 40–1, 152.

937   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. i, 604.

938   (1) MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 4978; (2) MS Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Vollers 165; (3) MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 6524; (4) MS Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. orient. 74; (5) MS Riyadh, King Saud University Library, No. 303.

939   Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) fol. 1ʳ.

940   Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Paris) fol. 264ᵛ.

941   Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Hamburg) 1ʳ. See also Brockelmann, *Katalog* 37.

942   Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-ẓunūn* iv, 228.

available manuscripts correspond almost verbatim to what *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* introduces as quotations from *al-ʿAqāʾiq*.[943] In four further instances, information found in *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* resembles statements that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* attributes to this work, although there is little or no literal overlap between the *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[944] In these cases, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* most probably paraphrases passages from *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*.

Further support of this identification comes from *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*, which, during its discussion of Moses' prophecy, in one instance mentions "Shams al-Dīn al-Maʿarrī in his book called *ʿAqāyiq al-ḥaqāyiq*"[945] as its source of information. While *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* admittedly contains no evidence of a connection between al-Maʿarrī's text and al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it clearly shows that the former was known and read in the social context of the sultan's court.

Why were the members of the sultan's court society interested in this particular text, especially since it was—unlike al-Kisāʾī's collection of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*—not widely available in the late Mamluk period?[946] One possible answer lies in the entertaining and uplifting content of the work, which was written to a considerable degree in rhymed prose. Each part of the text includes material from dozens of preaching sessions (*majālis*) that focus on a specific religious topic and combine religious instruction with pious exhortation. These sermons clearly address wide audiences, including people beyond the scholarly elite. The preacher, who is regularly identified throughout the work as

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943   (1) Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Riyadh) 33 (marginal pagination), corresponds verbatim to al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248, with the small differences that the later work has *Iskandar* instead of the synonymous *Dhū l-Qarnayn* and *māʾ* instead of *ʿayn* when describing the spring Alexander looked for. (2) The statement in al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Riyadh) fol. 43ʳ, that Joseph had received nine of the ten parts of beauty matches in part verbatim al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131.

944   (1) Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 24, 94, 340; and (MS Riyadh) 33 (marginal pagination), show similarities to al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 207; (ed. ʿAzzām) 93, in describing the power of Joseph's shirt. (2) Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 115, exhibits partial literal overlap with al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141–2, in explaining why Adam ate from the forbidden tree. (3) Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Riyadh) fol. 44ʳ, resembles the information included in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 259, on Judah's role in dissuading his brothers from killing Joseph. (4) Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Paris) fol. 31ʳ, is very similar to the material about the salvational value of the first part of the *shahāda* in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 152; (5) al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Riyadh) fol. 107ʳ, recalls the statement in al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 259, on the reward of people uttering the first part of the *shahāda*.

945   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 120ʳ.

946   Brockelmann, *Katalog* 37, calls the work "quite rare."

the author ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maʿarrī, addresses his listeners and readers with phrases such as, for example, "oh my dear one" (*yā ʿazīzī*),[947] "oh my darling" (*yā qurrat ʿaynī*),[948] or "oh believer" (*yā muʾmin*).[949] Moreover, sections styled as direct dialogues between al-Maʿarrī and anonymous interlocutors add to the vividness of the text.[950] Furthermore, the text includes numerous often quite simple Arabic verses[951] as well as quotations from the Quran and the corpus of prophetic traditions.[952]

To at least a certain extent, the author seems to have envisioned his work as a manual for preachers (sg. *wāʿiẓ*), as he writes after a lengthy section of poetry:

> I have given these verses at length and the preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) [should] recite from them what he chooses. [...] I did not include in this book readily prepared preaching sessions (*majālis*) nor pre-arranged sections as those who have come before me have already done this sufficiently [...]. Rather, I have related these preaching sessions (*majālis*) in a very detailed way (*ʿalā wajh al-aṭnāf wa-l-ikthār*) so that the beginner can take and select from them [what he needs] and that they may be a reminder for the advanced.[953]

The first two parts of the text consist primarily of sermons that take stories about the ancient prophets and Muḥammad as their point of departure.[954] The material is arranged in a roughly chronological order, for example, with the first sections of the first volumes dealing with the story of Adam at great length, covering more than 150 manuscript pages. At the beginning of this section, we read about its structure and its purposes:

> The writer who compiled and arranged this book (*muṣannif hādha l-kitāb*)[955] put together everything that is said regarding the *qiṣṣa* of one

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947   E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 33.

948   E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 166.

949   E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 308. See also Brockelmann, *Katalog* 37.

950   E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 12, 62, 69, 74, 78, 91, 98–9, 110, 139, 143–4, 147–8, 156, 188–91; (MS Riyadh) fol. 57ᵛ; (MS Hamburg), fols. 5ʳ–5ᵛ, 15ʳ.

951   On these verses, see also Brockelmann, *Katalog* 37.

952   Cf. for *ḥadīth*s, e.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 10, 13, 164.

953   Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 49.

954   Pauliny, Bemerkungen 122, therefore considers the entire work part of the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* genre.

955   On the root *ṣ-n-f* in this context, see Ghersetti, Anthologist 25–7; Schoeler, *Genesis* 2, 4–6, 42, 60, 68–81, 95, 128–9.

of the prophets of God Most High—may peace be upon them—and enclosed all subtleties (*laṭāyif*) together with the witticisms of the ingenious. He [also] mentioned all indicators (*ishārāt*) together with [their] various expressions. [Moreover], he divided everything into particular sections so that it would be enlightening to the preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) and a reminder for the one who has memorized [it].[956]

Frequent references to the lives of other prophets in a given sermon break up the chronological arrangement and add to the vividness of the accounts. In general, the material about a particular prophet resembles the popular material found in al-Kisāʾī's work much more than the contents of more scholarly works such as that of al-Thaʿlabī. This similarity establishes a connection between the two known main sources of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as does the fact that like al-Kisāʾī, al-Maʿarrī seems to invoke older authorities such as Wahb b. Munabbih[957] and Ibn ʿAbbās[958] rather indiscriminately. Narratives about ancient prophets are repeatedly interrupted by passages pointing out the moral lessons that can be drawn from their lives.

The later sections of the text primarily contain reflections on selected Qurʾanic verses, ethical topics, and famous figures of early Islamic history.[959] Yet, all the identifiable references in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* point to the first two parts of the text, including primarily *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material. This suggests that the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were primarily interested in the popular material on the prophets before Muḥammad in *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*—an observation that matches the conclusions drawn from our discussion of the quotations from al-Kisāʾī's work in the *majālis* accounts, as these quotations likewise indicate that the attendees of the sultan's salon were particularly fond of edifying and entertaining stories about the ancient prophets.

The social background of al-Maʿarrī's text may have played a similar role in its favorable reception at the Mamluk court. In biographical works, al-Maʿarrī appears as both a successful preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) and an accomplished poet.[960] His talents brought him into contact with the highest political circles. After coming

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956 Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 21–2. See also al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Riyadh) fol. 42ʳ.

957 E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 22, 47, 76, 84, 165, 198; (MS Riyadh) fols. 40ʳ, 45ʳ, 78ʳ; (MS Paris) 21ʳ.

958 E.g., al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Dublin) 161, 204; (MS Riyadh) fols. 41ᵛ, 62ᵛ, 158ᵛ; (MS Paris) fols. 2ʳ, 21ʳ, 57ᵛ, 58ᵛ, 59ᵛ, 61ʳ, 65ʳ, 68ʳ; (MS Hamburg) fols. 20ᵛ, 41ᵛ.

959 See also Brockelmann, *Katalog* 37.

960 Cf. Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* v, 178–9; al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat* (*Shām*) ii, 92–7; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī* xviii, 267–9; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt* ii, 301.

to Baghdad in the clothes of an itinerant Sufi, he was appointed to hold preaching sessions in the residence of the Seljuq ruler, who himself attended these meetings.[961] Moreover, al-Maʿarrī also entered the service of the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Muqtafī li-Amr Allāh (r. 530–55/1136–60).[962] According to Brockelmann, al-Maʿarrī functioned as the "court preacher"[963] of the ʿAbbasids. The beginning of the Leipzig manuscript of *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* corroborates this statement:

> [The contents of this work come] from the speech of the *shaykh*, the unique learned *imām*, [...] the preacher of the *imām*s of right guidance, the rightly guided caliphs of the ʿAbbasid family—may God be satisfied with all of them—, namely [the preacher] of our lord, our master al-Muqtafī li-Amr Allāh, the Commander of the Believers [...].[964]

The fact that al-Maʿarrī's *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* claims to comprise the sermons of an extremely popular preacher who served both the ʿAbbasid and the Seljuq courts might account for the great respect that the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* accorded to this text. It was read aloud[965] or at least quoted during multiple sessions. Moreover, in one *majlis*, the sultan expressed his esteem for the long deceased al-Maʿarrī in a singular way, by reciting the first chapter of the Quran three times for the latter's benefit.[966]

Despite this unambiguous demonstration of respect for the author of *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*, the *majālis* participants did not accept all of what al-Maʿarrī had to say uncritically; rather, at times they tried to find explanations for elements that remained unexplained in his work,[967] harmonized seemingly contradictory passages, or even openly rejected statements they considered unacceptable. Note, for example, the following dialogue about Adam:

> **First question:** The author of *al-ʿAqāʾiq* said: "The reason that Adam ate from the tree is forgetfulness, as indicated by 'but he forgot' [Q 2:115]." In another place, he said: "[The reason was] devilish insinuation (*waswasa*)." In what way [can one achieve] a harmonization (*tawfīq*) of these two [statements]?

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961   Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī* xviii, 266. See also al-Kutubī, *Fawāt* ii, 300.
962   Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī* xviii, 266.
963   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 437.
964   Al-Maʿarrī, *al-ʿAqāʾiq* (MS Leipzig) fol. 1ᵛ.
965   Cf. al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 247.
966   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 143; (ed. ʿAzzām) 54.
967   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 41–2; 152, 248.

> **Answer:** Our lord the sultan said: "This means that Adam forgot his superiority over the angels, or he forgot the covenant (*ʿahd*) [he had made with God] and subsequently [the devil] instilled evil in him."[968]

Here, the sultan is presented as solving an apparent contradiction in the text of *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*, but without refuting what the text said.[969] At other times, members of the sultan's circle approached it more critically:

> **Second question:** The author of *al-ʿAqāʾiq* said: "Gabriel came 24,000 times to the Prophet—peace be upon him."
> **Answer:** I said: "This would necessarily mean that Gabriel came down to him—upon whom be peace—three times a day, although the period in which the Prophet received no revelation (*fatrat al-waḥy*) is clearly established in the authentic traditions."[970]

Even more explicitly, the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is quoted as saying: "This book [that is, *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq*] includes many weak (*ḍaʿīfa*) things."[971]

Thus, we see that the participants of the sultan's salon greatly respected al-Maʿarrī and his work, but did not hesitate to criticize it when they saw fit. This ambiguous attitude toward the text and its intensive reception in the *majālis* might be explained by the close connections between *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* and earlier ʿAbbasid and Seljuq rulers. Their engagement with *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* gave the sultan and those around him an opportunity to participate virtually in the court life of these esteemed dynasties and at the same time demonstrate that they were able to fully appreciate and at times even surpass the intellectual achievements of these courts. The fact that *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* emerged from a courtly context must have been well-known to the *majālis* attendees, given that the work itself states this. Together with the way the text, especially its passages on ancient prophets, was well-suited to meet the interests of al-Ghawrī and those around him, it is understandable that they were so fond of al-Maʿarrī's otherwise not widely read book.

Although al-Maʿarrī's *Kitāb al-ʿAqāʾiq* and al-Kisāʾī's *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* were important reference texts about ancient prophets in the sultan's salons, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* also include plenty of other *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*

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968 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141–2.
969 See al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131, for a similar case.
970 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 203. On this passage, see also Mauder, Read.
971 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 233. For a similar statement, see also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 145.

material not included in these two works. While for the moment, this material cannot be attributed to specific sources, it nevertheless reveals the great attention that the ruler and his court society accorded to this field of knowledge. This interest in additional *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* material from further sources not only indicates that members of the court cared little about the criticism leveled against the so-called *isrāʾīliyyāt* by Ibn Taymiyya and his followers, but also accords well with other evidence suggesting that al-Ghawrī was deeply interested in the prophets before Muḥammad. For example, in 919/1513, the sultan commissioned the production of valuable *ṭirāz* coverings for the sepulchers of seven ancient prophets buried in the Mamluk realm. These coverings were openly displayed and, at least in the case of the one designated for the tomb of the Prophet Abraham, dispatched with great pomp to their destinations. In the case of Abraham's sepulcher, a second set of coverings was sent off two years later in a similar fashion.[972] Moreover, the fact that al-Malaṭī included in his literary offering to the sultan a work on the lives of the prophets before Muḥammad also points to the particular attention accorded to this topic among members of the court, as does the observation that the mirror-for-princes *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān* begins with a rather unusual *khuṭba*, in terms of both length and content, praising the ancient prophets.[973] We also know of a work of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* literature that was part of the sultan's library.[974] Finally, al-Ghawrī's Ottoman Turkish poems also include several references to ancient prophets.[975]

While religious motivations were probably, at least in part, the reason for this unusual degree of attention to the ancient prophets, other considerations might have played an important role as well, as the case of the Prophet Joseph indicates. This prophetic figure stands out as his life is the only one the Quran narrates in one continuous section, Surat Yūsuf.[976] Arguably, the Quran itself calls this narrative "the best of stories" (*aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*)[977] (Q 12:3) and its literary features have fascinated readers and listeners for centuries.[978] Moreover,

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972   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 337, 480. See also McGregor, Networks 319–20; Petry, *Protectors* 161–2.

973   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 2ʳ–3ᵛ, 5ᵛ.

974   The anonymous work *Qiṣṣat Mūsā wa-Khiḍr ʿalayhimā al-salām* copied by a *mamlūk* is preserved in ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 41 (see Flemming, Activities 256; Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 410; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 258).

975   E.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 66–7, 92, 97, 101, 116–7, 134–5, 138, 141.

976   On the Quranic material about Joseph, see, e.g., Tottoli, *Prophets* 28–31; Speyer, *Erzählungen* 187–224; Goldman, Joseph; Firestone, Yūsuf 352–3.

977   See Goldman, Joseph 55, on this phrase.

978   Cf., e.g., Tottoli, *Prophets* 28–9; Norris, Elements 256.

there are numerous extra-Quranic narratives about Joseph in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* literature and beyond.[979]

Apart from Muḥammad, no prophet is mentioned more frequently in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* than Joseph, with six *majālis* dedicated entirely or primarily to him.[980] In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, among the ancient prophets, only the references to Moses outnumber those to Joseph. The topics related to Joseph discussed in these two works include questions about his status vis-à-vis other prophets,[981] his beauty,[982] grammatical and philological issues in Surat Yūsuf,[983] why Joseph's story is narrated in the Quran only once,[984] how and why his body was taken to Jerusalem,[985] and the nature of the love the wife of Joseph's owner felt for him.[986] It seems that questions related to Joseph were among the most favorite topics of the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.

Yet, scholarly debates were not the only way al-Ghawrī and members of his court approached this prophetic figure. Throughout our main sources, we also find traces of a political project that aimed to relate the person of the sultan to that of the Quranic Joseph, in order to buttress and legitimate al-Ghawrī's rule.[987] At the center of this project were measures to present al-Ghawrī as heir to the prophet or indeed, as a full-fledged second Joseph. Hence, the phrase "heir (*wārith*) of king Joseph the friend [of God]" appears in the list of al-Ghawrī's titles at the beginning of both *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.[988] Al-Sharīf includes the same sultanic title twice in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,[989] but goes one step further, by calling the Mamluk sultan "the Joseph of Egypt."[990]

These efforts to present al-Ghawrī as the inheritor of Joseph's rank were not limited to the *majālis* texts. In the introductory passage of the copy of the endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, we read about his ascen-

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979   On the extra-Quranic material, see, e.g., Goldman, Joseph 57; Firestone, Yūsuf 353; Heath, Volksliteratur 431; Pauliny, Bemerkungen 111.

980   Cf. table 3.1 in section 3.1.1.2 above.

981   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 61–3, 122; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 21–2, 81, 233.

982   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 131.

983   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 97–100, 173, 220; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30–1; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 44–5, 78, 206–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 91–2.

984   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 100–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 31–4.

985   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 25–6.

986   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 172–4; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 74, 77–8.

987   See also briefly Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 148.

988   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 2ʳ–2ᵛ. The same title appears also in Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 107ᵛ.

989   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 108, 118; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30, 38.

990   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 202; (ed. ʿAzzām) 86.

sion to the sultanate: "He advanced in his solemn procession (*mawkib*) in most seemly gravity to the throne of kingship (*takht al-mulk*) that is named after Joseph the friend [of God]."[991] *Al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* likewise refers to the sultan as sitting on Joseph's throne.[992]

The attempts to identify al-Ghawrī with the Quranic Joseph did not only employ the rather simple rhetorical means mentioned so far, but went beyond this. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* we also find traces of more sophisticated measures that were used to emphasize the connections between the two men. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* narrates the discussion of two participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* regarding whether or not Joseph had attained the same position as their ruler:

> **Third question:** Did Joseph the friend [of God] reach the rank of the sultanate or not?
>
> **Answer:** It was said: "Yes, as indicated by 'My Lord! You have given me kingship (*mulk*)'[993] [Q 12:101], although the weakness [of this evidence] (*ḍuʿfuhu*) is apparent."

Yet, the similarities between al-Ghawrī and Joseph did not end with this reference to their political status. *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* credits al-Ghawrī with recounting a version of the life of Joseph in which it was said: "Praise be to Him who turns rulers into slaves for their disobedience and who turns slaves into rulers for their obedience."[994] While this statement is a fitting comment on the story of Joseph, it could also be understood as highlighting another common feature between the Quranic figure and al-Ghawrī: Both men began their careers as slaves, then rose to supreme rule.[995] Accordingly, both the Quranic prophet and the Mamluk sultan appear to be personally chosen by God for their respective offices because of their moral virtues. By highlighting this biographical parallel between himself and the prophet, al-Ghawrī arguably tried to present his rule as divinely ordained and himself as equal in character to the Prophet Joseph, who was widely seen as paragon of qualities such as wisdom, trustworthiness, truthfulness, and justice.[996]

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991 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 4.

992 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 303ʳ.

993 Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

994 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 34ʳ.

995 On this motive, see also Yosef, Relatives 67–9.

996 Firestone, Yūsuf 352; Auer, *Symbols* 43–6 (on Joseph's virtues).

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya includes two additional references to similarities between the biographies of al-Ghawrī and Joseph. In the passages on the sultan's early life, it states that al-Ghawrī had twelve siblings, like Joseph.[997] Moreover, we learn that the future Mamluk ruler was bought in Egypt for fifty gold coins, a price similar to the one paid for Joseph.[998] Furthermore, according to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, there even existed a blood relation between al-Ghawrī and Joseph:

> The origin of the word *jarkas* (Circassians) is *jār kas*, meaning "four persons" in the Persian language.[999] I saw in the history of the non-Arabs (*tārīkh al-ʿajam*) that four of the brothers of Joseph—namely Ruben (Rūbīl), Simeon (Shamʿūn), Levi (Lāwī), and Dāyāk[1000]—were embarrassed by [what they had done to] Joseph and fled from him because he had suffered these things from them. Therefore, they were ashamed to meet him, fled, settled in the lands of the North because of [their] embarrassment and agitation, and begot offspring [there]. Therefore, [their] heirs (*wurrāth*) [now] rule over the districts of Egypt.[1001]

The text continues:

> [The Circassians'] inheritance of the rule over Egypt indicates that they belong to the offspring of Jacob—upon whom be peace—, because Joseph—upon whom be peace—was the ruler of the districts of Egypt.[1002]

According to these passages, as a Circassian al-Ghawrī was an—albeit quite distant—relative of the Prophet Joseph, as four of the latter's brothers were the progenitors of his people. Through this genealogy, Circassians such as al-Ghawrī became the legitimate rulers of Egypt, as this land constituted their inheritance through their progenitors' brother Joseph. Thus, Circassian and thereby al-Ghawrī's rule over the country of the Nile was legitimate for at least two reasons: As descendants of the Prophet Jacob, the Circassians were of prophetic origin and therefore enjoyed a particular nobility.[1003] Secondly,

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997   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 63ᵛ. On Joseph's twelve siblings, see Gen 30:21; 35:23–6.
998   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 64ᵛ.
999   Persian *chār*—or, in the Arabized spelling, *jār*—means "four" and *kas* "man, person." Cf. Steingass, *Dictionary* 384, 1028.
1000   Possibly the biblical Dān mentioned in Gen 35:25 as one of Jacob's sons.
1001   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 34ᵛ.
1002   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 35ʳ.
1003   It is tempting to read the discussion about Joseph's brothers analyzed in section 4.2.2

and more importantly, as the Prophet Joseph's heirs, the Circassian people had a claim to rule over Egypt that stretched back thousands of years and was divinely ordained. Hence, opposing their rule in general and that of al-Ghawrī who resembled his relative Joseph in numerous aspects in particular would be a violation of both the laws of dynastic inheritance and God's will.[1004]

It is unclear how widespread these claims for a prophetic lineage of Sultan al-Ghawrī were in his days, given that they are not mentioned in any other source analyzed in the present study. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the figure of Joseph had political implications for al-Ghawrī and his rule. Thus, the intense focus on this prophet in the *majālis* debates might at least in part be the result of the sultan's attempts to present himself as his heir. Building on popular material, as found in the works of al-Kisāʾī and al-Maʿarrī, must have appeared particularly promising in this regard. Unlike other, more sophisticated strategies to legitimate his rule, direct references to a figure such as Joseph, who was familiar to all of his subjects, guaranteed that al-Ghawrī's claims to legitimate rule would reach as broad an audience as possible. While not every Egyptian might have understood how al-Ghawrī's expertise in legal or theological questions qualified him for his position, they could probably easily relate to the idea that their sultan was an indirect descendant of a man who, as the Bible and the Quran said, was a former slave who had once ruled their country by divine decree. Thus, the integration of material from the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* into his claims for legitimacy can be understood as a particularly significant communicative strategy aimed at employing religiously charged symbols to affirm al-Ghawrī's supreme status. Hence, the engagement of al-Ghawrī and his court society with the stories of the ancient prophets might have been motivated not only by scholarly and religious reasons, but also by political motives.[1005]

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in light of this genealogy, especially since al-Ghawrī argued in favor of their prophethood. Given the lack of any direct textual link, however, such an interpretation remains speculative.

1004 On genealogical legitimation, see also section 6.2.2 below.

1005 Previous Muslim rulers of Egypt likewise presented as Joseph's successors include Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 566–89/1171–93, cf. Frenkel, Crusaders, esp. 362, 366–9) and Baybars (cf. Yosef, Relatives 65–6; Frenkel, Crusaders 369; Herzog, Eyes 37; Herzog, *Geschichte* 138–9) and Barqūq (r. 784–91/1382–9 and 792–801/1390–9, cf. Yosef, Relatives 66–7). In general, see Yosef, Relatives 63–9. For European travelers explaining Mamluk rule over Egypt with reference to the biblical Joseph, see also Haarmann, Joseph's Law 59–60; Haarmann, System 13–5; Mauder, Rule 162–3.

4.2.5   *Poetry, Riddles, Prose Stories, and Related Fields of Literature*

According to our sources, presentations of and discussions about versified material and prose texts of a primarily literary character played a rather modest role in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[1006] *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* features the highest percentage of this kind of material, which makes up 18 percent of its contents. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, 13 percent of the material presented as originating from the *majālis* falls into this category, while the respective amount for *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is 5 percent.

Among this material, poetry (*shiʿr*), narrowly defined, and other forms of versified material make up only a small fraction, suggesting that al-Ghawrī and the members of his salons paid only very limited attention to poems and verses. This stands in marked contrast to what we would generally expect for learned social gatherings in the pre-modern Islamicate world, where poems were often one of the primary topics of conversation. The fact that not all participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were native Arabic speakers and might therefore have lacked the language skills to fully appreciate Arabic poetry might account for this situation. The same applies to poetry in other languages such as Ottoman Turkish or Persian.

When the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* include poetry at all, it is usually incorporated not for its literary value, but for the political significance of its contents, author, or dedicatee. The only Arabic lines of poetry that feature in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* belong to a praise poem for al-Ghawrī presented to him by one of the *majālis* attendees[1007] and to a religious poem by ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ that was the subject of a heated debate with considerable political implications in late Mamluk Cairo.[1008] Similarly, most of the poems in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are included for reasons other than their literary quality.[1009] For example, this is true for an Ottoman Turkish chronogram composed on the occasion of the death of one of al-Ghawrī's sons,[1010] a line of Arabic poetry included in a section extolling the sultan's construction activities,[1011] and a quo-

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1006   My understanding of what constitutes Arabic prose literature follows Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature.

1007   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 129; (ed. ʿAzzām) 42.

1008   On this debate and its political ramifications, see section 4.1.2.2 above and section 5.1.2 below. The verse is quoted in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 153; (ed. ʿAzzām) 45.

1009   Poems in the section of the work about the Prophet's birthday are discussed in section 5.1.1.2 below.

1010   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 48; (ed. ʿAzzām) 21. On chronogram poems, see, e.g., Windfuhr, Riddles 317, 328–30; Talib, *Epigram* 31–2.

1011   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 174; (ed. ʿAzzām) 69.

tation from a poem by a Persianate ruler.[1012] In one instance, a line of poetry is cited to address a philological problem in the context of Quranic exegesis.[1013] Other poems are referred to, but not quoted as literary texts in the *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[1014] The few verses included in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* usually form part of larger narratives.[1015]

Versified riddles, called *alghāz* (sg. *lughz*) are one type of versified material that recurs in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. As part of a popular genre of both Arabic[1016] and Persian[1017] literature, these riddles generally take the form of versified questions asking the names of things or concepts in a puzzling and sometimes seemingly contradictory way.[1018]

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya includes forty-nine versified *alghāz* presented as originating in the proceedings of the *majālis*. Typical examples include the following.

First riddle:
Who is a judge who has dispensed justice among the people for ages?
 He has palms (or scales, *kaff*), but has no fingertips.
I have seen that the people accept his judgment,
 but he does not speak and has no tongue.
Someone said: The scales (*al-mīzān*).[1019]

Second riddle:
Verily, let me know which you can see
 from among the birds in the lands of the Arabs and the non-Arabs?
It is eaten, deliciously cooked at times,
 and it is eaten when it firms up in the fire.
It has no hand and has no mouth,
 it has no legs and it has no feet.

1012 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134.
1013 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 241; (ed. ʿAzzām) 119.
1014 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141, 167; (ed. ʿAzzām) 63.
1015 E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 82ʳ–83ʳ, 110ʳ–111ʳ; ii, fols. 16ᵛ–16ʳ, 76ʳ–76ᵛ.
1016 Cf. van Gelder, Lughz 479. On Arabic riddles, see, e.g., van Gelder, Muʿammā; van Gelder, Lughz 479; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās* 379–83; Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 158, 344; Bencheneb, Lughz 806–7; Bauden, Huit, esp. 88, 95–100; Weil, *Mädchennamen*; Talib, *Epigram* 29–32, 53–5; Smoor, Candle 295–312.
1017 On Persian riddles and related forms of literature, see, e.g., Windfuhr, Riddles; Seyed-Gohrab, *Riddles*; Orsatti, Riddle; Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Loġaz*; Scott, *Riddles*; Binbaş, *Networks* 35, 48–50, 66, 80–8; Losensky, *Welcoming* 154–60.
1018 Bencheneb, Lughz 806; Windfuhr, Riddles 315–6. See also Orsatti, Riddle 77, 79.
1019 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 97–8.

> It has no brain and it has no blood,
>> it has no bone and it has no downs.
> **Answer:** Our lord the sultan said: "This is the egg (*bayḍa*)."[1020]

As in these examples, the riddles are often rather unsophisticated. Moreover, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām showed that in part, they exhibit linguistic peculiarities that are best explained as a result of the influence of the Egyptian dialect.[1021] Together with the fact that it is not possible to track down any of the versified riddles in earlier works of Arabic *lughz* poetry, these points suggest that this is local Egyptian material from a non-elite background.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī includes riddles as well, although these are usually not versified, as in the following example.

> **Question:** Of which twelve remain eleven[1022] when thirty have passed? When this question came before our lord, His Noble Station [that is, the sultan], none of those present could answer it and they acknowledged their inability to do so.
>
> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "This is the year. It consists of twelve months. If one of its months, which equals thirty days, has passed, then eleven months remain."[1023]

Moreover, *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* also confirms al-Ghawrī's interest in riddles, as it says about the sultan: "He knows the arts of poetry (*şiʿr*) and of rhymed riddles (*muʿammā*) well."[1024]

By engaging in riddling, al-Ghawrī and those around him participated in a typical form of Islamicate playful courtly communication; sources in both Arabic and Persian portray riddle-solving as a common element of courtly *majālis* and similar events: The *Arabian Nights* depict riddles as an important aspect of testing the abilities of the slave girl Tawaddud in one of Hārūn al-Rashīd's courtly *majālis*.[1025] More reliable evidence shows that riddle poetry flourished at the courts of the Hamdanids[1026] and the Buyids.[1027] The blossoming of riddle culture at the courts of Ḥusayn Bāyqarā and other Timurid

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1020   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 49; (ed. ʿAzzām) 22.
1021   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ed. ʿAzzām) 33 (footnote 1).
1022   The manuscript has "ten."
1023   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 288–9.
1024   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 16. See also Flemming, Perser 91.
1025   Talmon, Tawaddud 121.
1026   Smoor, Candle 298.
1027   Naamen, *Literature* 142–3.

rulers is almost contemporaneous to al-Ghawrī.[1028] Given that al-Ghawrī was personally very interested in the cultural life of other Islamicate courts, including Persianate ones, it stands to reason that his occupation with riddles might have been informed by the cultural practices of these rulers and their court societies.

Moreover, riddles and riddling played an important role as entertainment in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. As Th. Emil Homerin argued, Arabic riddle poems of the Mamluk period can be seen as part of "a social ritual or game where play, not profundity, was the aim" and are "indicative […] of playful erudition and cultural sophistication."[1029] This suggests that we can understand the *lughz* poems in our sources as testimonies of a specific form of learned communication that accorded considerable value to qualities such as playfulness and to light-hearted, but at the same time thought-provoking entertainment.[1030] Hence, the engagement in riddling stands beside other entertaining cultural practices in the *majālis* such as listening to musical performances or delving into narratives about ancient prophets. Moreover, the fact that the riddles discussed in the *majālis* seem to have been of a local Egyptian background indicates a connection between this entertaining aspect of Mamluk court life and the broader cultural environment.

Yet, we should not mistake the practices of riddling in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* for mere diversion. In both Arab and Persianate cultural contexts, riddles were seen as perfect intelligence tests.[1031] Moreover, riddles were usually posed in a competitive setting.[1032] When our sources identify the persons engaged in riddling, it is almost always the sultan who solves or, in a few cases, poses riddles, thereby demonstrating his intelligence. It is possible that this role of the sultan as the supreme riddle-solver is either a reflection of a performative demonstration of the sultan's abilities in the *majālis* or part of a narrative strategy of the authors of our sources, who depict the sultan as the one person able to provide the solutions to the questions raised in their writings, thereby presenting al-Ghawrī as the hermeneutical key[1033] to their works. In these mutually non-exclusive scenarios, the practice of riddling constitutes a communicative strategy to demonstrate the sultan's supreme intellectual abilities.

1028   Cf. Subtelny, Scenes 140–3; Subtelny, *Circle* 73–4; Subtelny, Art 124. See also Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Loġaz* 185–6; Losensky, *Welcoming* 154–60.

1029   Homerin, Reflections 74 (both quotations). See also Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Loġaz* 219–20.

1030   See also Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Loġaz* 1.

1031   Smoor, Candle 296; Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Loġaz* 1, 210–3, 219–20. See also Smoor, Candle 309; al-Musawi, *Republic* 249.

1032   Scott, *Riddles* 68–70.

1033   I thank Matthew Keegan (New York) for pointing me to this term.

Compared to the limited amount of versified material in our sources, prose narratives are almost omnipresent. Our texts do not use a single word to denote the pertinent textual units, but rather employ a multifaceted, yet not always precise and consistent terminology. Among the three texts, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* exhibit close similarities in the terms they use and the meaning they attach to them, as should be expected given their close relation. Therefore, we can analyze the terminological choices of these texts together.[1034]

The term that appears most often—almost 200 times—in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and also features in several instances in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to denote a prose narrative is *ḥikāya* (pl. *ḥikāyāt*), a word that in Mamluk times usually has the rather broad meaning of "tale, story, narrative, legend."[1035] In our sources, this term frequently applies to longer narratives of historical and non-humorous content. Moreover, a *ḥikāya* in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* is normally a self-contained, rather detailed narrative unit that relates a story that is not considered fictional. Following A.F.L. Beeston, we can identify most *ḥikāyāt* in these two sources as anecdotes in the narrower sense of the word. According to Beeston, an anecdote is a brief story that is "set against a background of circumstantial detail" and is "true or presented as true" while forming "a self-sufficient unit."[1036] It appears plausible to identify most *ḥikāyāt* in the two texts as anecdotes that according to our sources were related or read aloud in al-Ghawrī's salons. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the term *ḥikāya* has performative connotations and is used to indicate that a given story was narrated, recited, or presented in a given social setting.[1037] Moreover, holding *majālis* and recounting anecdotes were closely related cultural practices in the premodern period.[1038]

A term closely related to *ḥikāya* in the two texts is the much rarer *nādira* (pl. *nawādir*), which appears fewer than ten times in the two works together. Like *ḥikāya*, it denotes a longer self-contained prose narrative that often fulfills all the criteria of an anecdote. The only notable difference between *ḥikāyāt* and *nawādir* in the texts is that the latter include more consistently funny or

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1034   Only terms appearing more than three times in a given text are considered.

1035   Pellat, Ḥikāya 369. On this term, see also Pellat, Ḥikāya 367–9; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 132–5.

1036   Beeston, al-Hamadhānī 125 (all quotations).

1037   Al-Musawi, Narrative 271. See also Ceccato, Drama 348–52; Murphey, *Exploring* 52; Ceccato, Drama 348–52.

1038   Cf. Ceccato, Drama 353; Robinson, Paradise 152–3. See also Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama* 103.

witty punchlines.[1039] This matches Pellat's definition of *nādira* as "a pleasing anecdote containing wit, humour, jocularity and lively repartee."[1040] Again, the presence of this kind of material in the *majālis* texts is hardly surprising, given that *nawādir* were typically told by *nudamāʾ* to entertain rulers.[1041]

Other related terms include *qiṣṣa*, *dhikr*, and *wāqiʿa*, all of which appear only, albeit rather frequently, in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Here, *qiṣṣa* refers almost exclusively to stories about ancient prophets; thus it appears to be a shortened singular of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. *Dhikr* (report) and *wāqiʿa* (incident) feature exclusively in historical contexts, where *dhikr* introduces longer narratives, and *wāqiʿa* usually precedes short notes.

Two further pertinent and closely interrelated terms are *durra* (lit. pearl, pl. *durar*) and *nukta* (lit. speck, pl. *nukat*). Both words denote rather short narratives—at times only single sentences—of a witty and ingenious character and can often best be translated as "aphorism."[1042] *Durra* appears almost one hundred times in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and half a dozen times in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. *Durar* are almost always attributed to the sultan, suggesting that this term not only denotes a specific type of textual unit, but also indicates the person telling it. Usually, a *durra* is not plainly humorous, rather it has, at times, an uplifting and pious quality.[1043] By contrast, *nukat* can sometimes be outright funny[1044] and in the about forty instances in which they appear in the texts, they are usually not presented as al-Ghawrī's utterances. The last relevant term, *ʿajība* (lit. wondrous thing), appears in half a dozen instances in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* to introduce short narratives of unusual, non-factual, or openly fantastic content.[1045]

Although *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* use the above-mentioned terms to refer to different types of texts and clearly do not treat them as synonyms, the texts are not always systematic in their terminology. The fact that one and the same narrative that appears in both texts is called *nukta* in

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1039   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 14ʳ–14ᵛ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 90–1.

1040   Pellat, Nādira 856. See also Spies, Erzählstoffe 686, 702–4; Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 25–6; Marzolph, Humour 294; Heath, Volksliteratur 433.

1041   Pellat, Nādira 856–7. See also Pellat, Ḥikāya 371.

1042   My understanding of "aphorism" follows Berger, Aphorism. See also Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature 4–5.

1043   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 89ᵛ, 93ʳ; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 299.

1044   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 14ʳ, 74ᵛ–75ʳ, 77ʳ.

1045   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 74ʳ; ii, fols. 36ʳ, 51ᵛ. On this term, see Langner, *Untersuchungen* 132.

al-Kawkab al-durrī[1046] but *ḥikāya* in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*[1047] clearly demonstrates that the boundaries between these categories can sometimes be quite fuzzy. Thus, we must agree with Joseph Sadan who states that in premodern Arabic literature "there is no consistent classification of forms of stories according to fixed terms."[1048]

The way al-Sharīf categorizes prose textual units in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that are presented as reflecting what was said and done in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* is notably different than the terminology in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. Like these two works, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* uses the term *ḥikāya* quite often, namely approximately two dozen times. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, however, its meaning is less clearly defined, as it can denote almost any type of prose narrative, including material on ancient prophets[1049] and historical matters.[1050]

Unlike *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* the preferred term for a longer humorous prose story is not *nādira*, but *laṭīfa* (subtlety, also witticism), which appears four times with this meaning.[1051] Although this finding once again indicates that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are more closely related to one another than to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, it is hardly surprising in the context of premodern Arabic literature more broadly, given that *laṭīfa* can be, at times, largely synonymous with *nādira*.[1052] *ʿAjība* appears five times in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and refers to remarkable, although not necessarily fantastic events.[1053] In light of these differences, it is noteworthy that the terms *durra* (used about two dozen times) and *nukta* (used four times) have precisely the same meanings in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as they do in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, including the direct and consistent connection between a *durra* and the sultan.

Although the terminology for prose material just outlined includes terms that refer to both literary and historical material, the present section focuses on the former and leaves the analysis of the historical passages to a later section. Such a differentiation is in line with the sources. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*,

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1046   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 55.

1047   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 95ᵛ–96ʳ.

1048   Sadan, Brewer 7. Similarly, see also Leder and Kilpatrick, Prose Literature 10.

1049   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 40, 207, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 92, 153.

1050   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 211, 219, 253; (ed. ʿAzzām) 130.

1051   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 9, 172, 215, 216; (ed. ʿAzzām) 8, 67, 97.

1052   Spies, Erzählstoffe 686. See also Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 26; Marzolph, Humour 294.

1053   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 214, 217, 251, 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 97, 128, 132.

for example, after a passage including material of primarily literary interest, the author states: "So let us now return to history (*tārīkh*)."[1054]

A significant portion of the literary material consists of humorous prose narratives.[1055] As mentioned, here we meet figures such as the wise fool Buhlūl, Qarāqūsh Juḥā, and Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn.[1056] Since these characters and the material associated with them has already received considerable scholarly attention, we focus here on a different kind of humorous material that, according to our sources, however, was also highly appreciated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*: amusing stories about people who claimed to be prophets (sg. *mutanabbī*). The fact that both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* include such stories suggests that they played a prominent role in al-Ghawrī's court.

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya features ten of these stories clustered at the beginning of the second volume.[1057] Five appear in a very similar form in the *munāsib* sections that al-Sharīf added after his accounts of the proceedings of a given *majlis*.[1058] One of the stories common to both texts reads in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* as follows:

> **Anecdote (*ḥikāya*):** A person claimed to be a prophet (*tanabbā*) in the time of a [certain] caliph. When he was brought in front of [the caliph], [the latter] asked him: "What is your miracle (*muʿjizatuka*)?" [The other man] said: "My miracle is that I know what is in your soul (*fī nafsika*)." [The caliph] asked: "And what is in my heart (*fī qalbī*)?" [The man] replied: "In your heart is that I am a liar." [The caliph] said: "You are right." Then, he ordered him to be thrown into prison. [The man] spent several days there. Then, [the caliph] ordered him to be brought [back] and asked: "Have you received any revelation?" [The man] replied: "No." [The caliph] asked: "Why?" [The man] said: "Because the angels do not enter prisons." Thereupon, the caliph laughed about him and ordered him to repent (*istatābahu*).[1059]

The version in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* adds and deletes a few circumstantial details, but clearly follows the same plot:

1054   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 3ᵛ.
1055   On Arabic humoristic prose in general, see Marzolph, *Arabia ridens*.
1056   Cf. section 3.1.3.2 above.
1057   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 7ʳ–8ᵛ.
1058   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 54, 59, 63, 105, 163–4.
1059   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ.

What is fitting for this *majlis* (*al-munāsib li-hādhā l-majlis*): It was said that a man claimed prophethood (*iddaʿā l-nubuwwa*) in the time of al-Maʾmūn. [Al-Maʾmūn] asked him: "What is your miracle (*mā muʿjizatuka*)?" [The man] said: "I know what is in your soul (*fī nafsika*)." Al-Maʾmūn said to him: "What is in my soul (*fī nafsī*)?" [The man] said: "In your soul is that I am a liar." [Al-Maʾmūn] said: "You are right." Then, he ordered him to be thrown into prison. Then, after some days, he asked him: "Has revelation come?" [The man] replied: "Angels do not enter prisons."[1060]

Another story that appears in both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* clearly belongs to the same type of material. The version in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* reads:

A woman claimed to be a prophetess in the time of al-Rashīd. [The people] said to her: "You are a prophetess?" She said: "Yes." They said: "Do you not believe in Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him salvation?" She said: "Yes." They said: "Our prophet said: 'There will be no prophet after me.'"[1061] She said: "And did he say 'There will be no prophetess after me'?" Thereupon, the people laughed about her and let her go her way.[1062]

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya has the following, very similar version:

What is fitting for this *majlis* (*al-munāsib li-hādhā l-majlis*): It was said that a woman claimed prophethood (*iddaʿā l-nubuwwa*) in the time of al-Rashīd. He said to her: "You are a prophetess?" She said: "Yes." Al-Rashīd said: "Our prophet said: 'There will be no prophet after me.'" She said: "The Prophet did not say: 'There will be no prophetess after me.'" Thereupon, he laughed and set her free.[1063]

When studying these and other similar stories included in our main sources, three questions immediately come to mind: First, how can we explain the considerable number of these stories in these texts? Second, how is it possible that they are so similar, given that, according to our findings, *Nafāʾis majālis*

1060   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 54.
1061   Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb Aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ*, no. 3455.
1062   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 8ᵛ.
1063   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 63.

al-sulṭāniyya and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* were written independently of one another? And third, why is this kind of material included at all?

As for the first two questions, it seems that both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* quote here one or several earlier written works that were in circulation among the members of al-Ghawrī's court society and might have been read aloud during the *majālis*. Stories about people who claim to be prophets are a common element in texts that include Arabic humorous prose material from the early Islamic period onward. Moreover, the stories featured in our sources appear in a very similar or identical form in some of these early literary works. In particular, corresponding passages for all but one of the ten stories appear in a single work of ʿAbbasid literature:[1064] Abū Saʿd Manṣūr b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī's (d. 421/1030) *Nathr al-durr* (The scattering of pearls), "the largest Arabic encyclopaedia of historical and humorous anecdotes."[1065]

Because of the wide, but so far insufficiently studied reception of al-Ābī's *Nathr al-durr*,[1066] it is not possible to ascertain whether members of al-Ghawrī's court society used this work directly or took their material from a related text. Yet, the fact that almost all pertinent stories in the *majālis* works have a parallel in such an early text clearly shows that, at least with regard to this particular subfield of narrative culture, the members of al-Ghawrī's court relied directly or indirectly on the ʿAbbasid literary heritage.

This ʿAbbasid background of the stories might have been precisely what made them attractive to the members of the court society, given that, as we have seen, they were interested in cultural achievements and literary practices that linked them with the world of ʿAbbasid court life. The fact that all the stories about the would-be prophets include references to ʿAbbasid caliphs might have added to their attractiveness to a late Mamluk courtly audience. Moreover, by using this particular kind of stories as a source of entertainment, the members of al-Ghawrī's court society demonstrated their erudition, given that these

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1064   (1) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 7ʳ (first story) corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 218; (2) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 7ʳ–7ᵛ corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 215; (3) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 7ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 59 corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 218; (4) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 54 corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 214; (5) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 8ʳ corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 217; (6) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 8ʳ–8ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 163–4 corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 217; (7) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 8ᵛ (first story) corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 215; (8) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 8ᵛ (second story) corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 215; (9) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 8ᵛ corresponds to al-Ābī, *Nathr* ii, 216.

1065   Marzolph, al-Ābī 21. On *Nathr al-durr*, see Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 40–5; van Gelder, Mixtures 169–72.

1066   On the state of research, see Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* i, 38–40.

stories not only required at least a modest knowledge of Islamic religious teachings to be fully grasped, but they also belonged to the corpus of *adab* material that an educated person was expected to master.

The circulation of stories of this kind at al-Ghawrī's court also indicates that it was acceptable to make jokes about even such an important religious concept as prophethood (*nubuwwa*). Although we know that jokes about religious subjects were not unheard of in Islamicate societies,[1067] this observation is nevertheless noteworthy given the otherwise strictly pious character of court life under al-Ghawrī and the fact that some of the stories touch upon important tenets of Sunni theology, such as miracles as the central proof of prophetic status.[1068] Moreover, instances in which people indeed claimed prophetic status are not unheard of in Islamicate history; hence the problem these stories allude to was not purely academic.[1069]

While the stories about self-proclaimed prophets may indicate a considerable openness among members of al-Ghawrī's court society regarding what kind of narrative material could be considered acceptable, at times, those participating in the sultan's *majālis* also decided that certain texts should not be recited or discussed. One such situation took place during a *majlis* on the last day of Ramaḍān 910/early March 1505:

> *Shaykh* Umm Abī l-Ḥasan came with two books, one of which was the *sīra* of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars and his invasion of [the lands of] the Franks. The second book [included] prophetic traditions about the merit of [being] Muslim (*fī faḍl al-muslim*). He wanted to read the complete contents of these books, although it is not possible to read them in an entire month.
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> **I said:** "It is not fitting to read these books on this night. As for the *sīra* of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, it is [not fitting] because if al-Malik al-Ẓāhir were [still] alive, he would wish to listen to the *sīra* of the *majlis* of our lord the sultan. As for the second book, it is far from being fitting for the night of ʿĪd [al-Fiṭr]. Nay, what is fitting on this noble night is to mention the merit of [the month of] Ramaḍān and the performance of [its fasting], and the merit and the blessing of the feast."[1070]

1067   See, e.g., van Gelder, Mixtures 170–1.

1068   Cf. Griffel, Concept 101–4, 140–1. See also Griffel, al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist 103–4, 112–5; Griffel, *Theology* 10; Antes, *Prophetenwunder*.

1069   For examples from Mamluk times, see Dols, *Madman* 463–4; Levanoni, Egypt 157. In general, see also Tritton, Prophets.

1070   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16. On this passage, see also Mauder, Read.

Among the two texts that the jester Umm Abī l-Ḥasan is said to have brought to the *majlis*, the first one is none other than the so-called *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*,[1071] a popular epic loosely based on the life of the Mamluk sultan Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77). It narrates his victories over crusaders, Mongols, Bedouin raiders, and other villains in "a long, rambling farrago full of imaginary battles, heroic exploits and magical occurrences."[1072] It belonged to the genre of popular *sīra* literature that blossomed during the Mamluk period.[1073]

Yet, despite its popularity, the idea of reading *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* in the sultan's *majlis* was rejected. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* gives two reasons for this decision: First, the work was simply too long—an argument that was absolutely justified, given that its modern print edition is six volumes.[1074] Second, the first-person narrator argued that Baybars himself would have been more interested in hearing about the exploits of al-Ghawrī's *majlis*. Apparently, this statement was motivated by a desire to project the learned discussions in the sultan's salons as more interesting—and possibly also more meritorious—than the stories about the feats of Baybars. Moreover, we might suggest that *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* was not read in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* because it praised another Mamluk ruler who might have overshadowed the current sultan, who largely lacked military merits, and this was just the opposite of what al-Ghawrī and those around him wanted to achieve through the courtly events of the *majālis*. Thus, while *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* constituted a popular and entertaining text that might have matched the interests of the *majālis* attendees quite well, it was

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1071   Irwin, Thinking 44, suggests that "presumably, the *Sīrah* in question was the history by Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, rather than the anonymous folk epic." Irwin, History 159, presents the same assumption as a fact. I disagree with this assumption for two reasons: Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir's (d. 692/1293) *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir*—unlike the multi-volume *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*—was not so long that it could not be read within a month and thus does not fit the description given in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Moreover, the title of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir's work is notably different from the title given by al-Sharīf, who is usually very accurate when quoting book titles. According to the conventions followed elsewhere in his text, al-Sharīf would have referred to Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir's work either as *Kitāb Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir* or as *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*. That the *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars* was extant in the tenth/sixteenth century is established in Herzog, *Geschichte*, esp. 393. See also Shoshan, Popular Literature 354; Hirschler, *Word* 183.

1072   Irwin, Baybars 143. On this work, see, e.g., Herzog, *Geschichte*; Herzog, Legitimität; Garcin (ed.), *Lectures*; Garcin, Histoire.

1073   Cf. Canova, *Sīra* Literature 726. See also Heath, Popular Narratives; Reynolds, Popular Prose 259–61; Hirschler, *Word* 165–84; Herzog, *Geschichte* 358–92.

1074   Cairo edition of 1908.

banished from the sultan's salons because its political implications ran counter to the motives of hosting these events.

Yet, the *majālis* participants were by no means negatively disposed toward all epic texts that reflected positively on other rulers. A case in point is the Persian epic *Shāhnāme*. As discussed above, al-Ghawrī commissioned the oldest known versified translation of this text into a Turkic language.[1075] The sultan's heavy investment in the production of the Ottoman Turkish version that fills four volumes in modern print and took ten years to complete begs the question of why the sultan was so interested in this work.

There are at least four possible, mutually non-exclusive answers: First, by sponsoring the translation of the *Shāhnāme*, al-Ghawrī could present himself as a well-versed and cultivated ruler who was interested in famous works of high literature and the knowledge contained therein. The prologue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* suggests that this was one of sultan's motivations.

> In [the sultan's] treasury there was the *Şāhnāme*,
> The name of which was known among high and low.
> He was fond of reading it,
> [As] he knows it to be one of the excellent things of the world. [...]
> The wise sultan (*sulṭān-ı ʿārif*) sees that in the *Şāhnāme*
> Much knowledge (*maʿārif*) has been spent.
> He wanted it to be translated into Turkic,
> In order for its meaning to be understood easily.
> He wants to know the state of the past,
> To know what Firdawsī has said,
> To read and learn the conditions of the kings,
> To see what has become of the traces of the kings.
> For they who hear the words today of the men of yesterday
> Ought to take lessons (*ʿibret*) from those before them.[1076]

While the text later points out that the sultan knew Persian very well, thereby indicating that he did not really need a translation,[1077] the fact remains that the prologue presents the translation project as a result of the sultan's genuine interest in the book and its instructive contents. By sponsoring the translation project, al-Ghawrī not only contributed to the "cross-fertilization of Arabic, Per-

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1075   Cf. section 3.3.2 above.

1076   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 17–8. Trans. quoted from D'hulster, *Sitting* 248, with slight modifications.

1077   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 19.

sian and Turkish literatures,"[1078] but also considerably enriched the symbolic communication available to the members of his court society.

Following this line of argumentation, as a secondary reason, we may interpret the translation project as an attempt by the sultan to establish a communicative connection between himself and the famous Persian kings of kings (sg. *shāhanshāh*) of the past. Thereby, he could buttress his claims to suzerainty over territories outside the Arabic-speaking world as expressed already in such titles as "sultan of the Arabs and non-Arabs,"[1079] "Lord of the rulers of the Arabs and non-Arabs,"[1080] "Lord of the Arabs, Persians, Daylamites, and Turks of his time,"[1081] "Lord of the rulers of the Turks, Arabs, and Persians,"[1082] and "king of kings"[1083] that appear in texts produced in the social context of his court. The particular interest of the sultan and members of his court society in the pre-Islamic tradition of kingship, which they viewed as an exemplary model of successful statecraft, is also attested to by the frequent references in our three main sources to famous rulers from the *Shāhnāme*. As seen above, already the *muqaddima* of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presents al-Ghawrī as the pinnacle of a line of famous rulers that includes pre-Islamic Iranian kings such as Ardashīr and Bahrām Gūr.[1084] Moreover, in the concluding sections of its accounts of individual sessions especially, the work includes numerous references to the kings of the *Shāhnāme*; thus, it creates close intertextual relations to the Persian epic.[1085]

While a heavy focus on the characters of the *Shāhnāme* is to be expected in a work as strongly influenced by Persianate culture as *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, it is noteworthy that similar, though less frequent references to the Iranian tradition of kingship are also found in other works originating in al-Ghawrī's court.[1086] This suggests that the sultan and those around him perceived the Persian monarchic tradition as depicted in the *Shāhnāme* as a forerunner to al-Ghawrī's rule, a tradition that they should study, emulate, and affiliate themselves with through communicative references.

1078   Stewart-Robinson, Review 277.
1079   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1.
1080   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 8.
1081   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 2ʳ.
1082   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2. See also Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.
1083   Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.
1084   Cf. section 3.1.1.2 above.
1085   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 21, 133, 156, 237, 247; (ed. ʿAzzām) 116, 126.
1086   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ed. ʿAzzām) 90; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 86ʳ–86ᵛ; ii, fols. 16ʳ, 38ʳ.

Third, the *Shāhnāme* translation project can also be seen as part of a communicative campaign whose primary audience was not located in the Mamluk realm, but rather consisted of the court societies of other polities. In the late middle and early modern periods, the *Shāhnāme* had become one of the primary reference texts by which to discuss, represent, and affirm rulership throughout most of the Islamicate world. As Emine Fetvacı argued, the extraordinary success of the work during this period may be because of the fact "that its heroes are drawn from Iran and Turan, [and] hence are possible role models for Turkic dynasties"[1087] who dominated the political landscape of the Islamicate world of this time.

As Charles P. Melville noted, in its home region of greater Iran, the *Shāhnāme* "has [...] been used by many [...] regimes, both imperial and provincial, to assert their rightful place in the political traditions of the country, and to legitimize their dynasty."[1088] Often, Iranian dynasties traced their ancestry back to a famous character of the work.[1089] Hence, copies of the *Shāhnāme* were among the most highly-valued objects of patronage and collection activities among Turkic rulers of Iranian territories.[1090] Outside the historical borders of Iran, the work also had a remarkable "resonance as a textual model of kingly virtues."[1091] For example, it is clear that the Rūm Seljuqs strongly identified with the tradition of rulership immortalized in the *Shāhnāme*, given that from the sixth/twelfth century onward, members of this dynasty were named after the legendary kings and heroes of al-Firdawsī's work.[1092] Further to the east, Turco-Mongol and especially Timurid rulers likewise took a keen interest in the work, which owes the existence of what is today known as its editio princeps to the patronage of a Timurid prince of the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century.[1093] Later on, the Safawid Shāh Ismāʿīl made a name for himself as a patron of valuable copies of the text and works inspired by it.[1094]

The Ottomans accorded a central place to this work in their courtly literary culture during the middle and early modern periods.[1095] The library of the

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1087   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 15.
1088   Melville, Shahnama 727. See also Ahmed, *Islam* 52; Amanat, Remembering 36.
1089   Melville, Image 360.
1090   Uluç, Lands 174.
1091   Melville, Introduction 7.
1092   Uluç, Lands 174. See also Peacock, Life 191; and on the earlier Seljuqs, see Melville, Image 360–2.
1093   Schmidt, Reception 121; Subtelny, Art 127. See also Uluç, Lands 175; Rogers, Architecture 64; Calmard, Literature 332; Melville, Image 343–51, 362–3, 365; Tanındı, Illustration 141–3; Subtelny, *Circle* 172–3.
1094   Moin, *Sovereign* 89–91.
1095   Schmidt, Reception 121.

Topkapı Sarayı holds more than fifty manuscripts of the work; these date from the eighth/fourteenth to the eleventh/seventeenth centuries and thus attest to the long-lasting interest of members of the Ottoman court in this text.[1096] The fact that out of these copies, forty-five include miniatures[1097] indicates that members of the Ottoman courts were willing to invest considerable amounts of economic capital to obtain representative manuscripts of the work as status symbols.[1098] Moreover, the frequent use of illustrated copies of the *Shāhnāme* as gifts both within Ottoman court society and in diplomatic relations further attests to the place of this work in Ottoman and transregional Islamicate courtly culture.[1099] Furthermore, Ottoman rulers were called upon to read the *Shāhnāme* as a means of historical and political instruction.[1100] We also know of a specialized body of storytellers known as *shāhnāme-khwān*s who recited the work in courtly contexts.[1101] From the early ninth/fifteenth century onward several Ottoman rulers or members of their courts commissioned partial or complete Turkic translations of the work.[1102] The autograph copy of the translation sponsored by al-Ghawrī as well as two other manuscripts of the same text ended up in the Topkapı Sarayı, thus physically forming part of the Ottoman engagement with this text.[1103]

The best illustration of how strongly the Ottomans identified with the ancient Iranian kings depicted in the *Shāhnāme*, however, can be seen in the way they recorded the memory of their own deeds and achievements in texts that not only emulated the style of al-Firdawsī's work, but also used its name. From the tenth/sixteenth century onward, Ottoman authors penned *Shāhnāme*s praising the exploits of their sultans. Over time, the Ottoman rulers began to appoint official and salaried *shāhnāmeci*s or "writers of *Shāhnāme*s" whose primary task was the production of Ottoman Turkish and Persian laudatory works about these rulers and the history of their realm in the tradition of the original *Shāhnāme*.[1104] Christine Woodhead convincingly interpreted the

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1096   Schmidt, Reception 122. See also Schmidt, Reception 123–5; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 50–2; Tanındı, Illustration; Bağci, Word; Çıpa, *Making* 119; Necipoğlu, Organization 37–8.
1097   Schmidt, Reception 122–3.
1098   Schmidt, Reception 126. See also Uluç, Lands 159–70, 177.
1099   Schmidt, Reception 124–6. See also Uluç, Lands 162; Tanındı, Illustration 143–4; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 28, 33, 37.
1100   Schmidt, Reception 126.
1101   Woodhead, Experiment 158. See also Woodhead, Reading 72; Çıpa, *Making* 118.
1102   Schmidt, Reception 128, 131–2. See also, e.g., Uluç, Lands 160–1, 177; Bağci, Word 165–6.
1103   Schmidt, Reception 129–30. On reasons for the Ottoman fascination with the text, see Çıpa, *Making* 119–20.
1104   Schmidt, Reception 132–4. On the *shāhnāmeci*s and their works, see also Woodhead,

existence of this peculiar historiographical tradition as evidence "for the close association between the person of the [Ottoman] sultan and the prestigious Iranian heroes [of the *Shāhnāme*]."[1105]

We should view al-Ghawrī's translation project against the transregional background of the *Shāhnāme*'s significance for courtly culture throughout much of the Islamicate world. That such a transregional perspective of interpretation is appropriate is confirmed by the illustrations of courtly scenes in the autograph copy of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, which employed the Persianate style in vogue at that time and were executed, at least in part, by artisans who trained in and adopted examples from the Turkmen tradition of miniature painting.[1106] Al-Ghawrī's *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, the Ottoman Turkish translation of a Persian work undertaken in an Arabic-speaking environment and illustrated with miniatures following Persianate examples is a material manifestation of the transregional communicative relations that existed among Islamicate courts in the late Mamluk period.

By sponsoring the first versified Turkic translation of the *Shāhnāme*, having it illustrated according to the courtly taste of his time and making its dramatis personae well-known examples of rulership at his court, al-Ghawrī demonstrated that he and those around him fully took part in what Irwin called the "international court culture"[1107] of the day. Thereby, he not only communicated to other courts that the Mamluks were rightful participants in this culture, but also that he himself stood in the tradition of the revered kings of old. Thus, the *Shāhnāme* translation project can be seen as an innovative[1108] and conscious attempt on al-Ghawrī's part to reaffirm Mamluk claims of suzerainty and to demonstrate that his court was culturally on a par with, indeed if not superior to that of his rivals and peers throughout the Islamicate world.

Experiment; Woodhead, Reading; Fetvaci, Office; Uluç, Lands 171–4, 176–7; Woodhead, Perspectives 173–5; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 15–20, 26, 46–7, 62–70, 123, 183, 216–7, 219, 233–4, 277–9; Fleischer, Mahdi 50–1; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat* 30, 105, 155, 239–40, 248–9, 298–9; Çıpa, *Making* 116–30. For parallels in Safawid and Indian contexts, see Calmard, Literature 332–3.

1105   Woodhead, Experiment 159.

1106   Atıl, Painting 163, 166, 169; Darling, *History* 123. See also Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 34; Atıl, *Renaissance* 264; Atasoy, Manuscrit 155–8; Mostafa, Paintings 11; Tanındı, Illustration 147. See also section 6.3.4 below.

1107   Irwin, Literature 28. See also Peacock, Life 217, on "the courtly culture of the medieval Eastern Mediterranean."

1108   The earlier Mamluk reception of the *Shāhnāme* was very limited, see Haarmann, Arabic 90; Newhall, *Patronage* 79. Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 77, notes that al-Ghawrī's "fascination with the *Shāhnāmah* [...] had no precedent among Mamluk monarchs."

Fourth, there is ample evidence that al-Ghawrī attempted to immortalize his name through his patronage of the translation of the *Shāhnāme*. As Kristof D'hulster showed, two passages in the prologue of the work indicate that al-Ghawrī had his fame after death in mind when commissioning and funding the project.[1109] One passage recounts that the Mamluk ruler said: "No one stays eternally in this world (*cihānda*), [therefore] a person must leave something behind to be remembered (*yādigārı*)."[1110]

The close connection that apparently existed in al-Ghawrī's mind between patronage, the *Shāhnāme*, and the immortality of his name is also confirmed in a section of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, which begins as follows:

> **The eleventh *majlis* [of the eighth *rawḍa*]:** I went up [to the citadel] on Wednesday, the 25th of Jumādā I [911].[1111] [The participants] sat in the Ashrafiyya [Hall] for 32 *daraja*s,[1112] and the *imām* was *shaykh* Shams al-Dīn al-Samadīsī. In [this *majlis*], there were anecdotes (*ḥikāyāt*) and questions [for discussion]. The *Shāhnāme* was completed in these days. I say: The completion of this book in Turkic in his noble name counts among the marvels (*'ajā'ib*) of the reign (*dawla*) of our lord the sultan.
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> **Anecdote:** Our lord the sultan said: "Sultan Maḥmūd [of Ghazna] wanted his name to remain till the last day. It was said to him: 'Build high buildings!' He said: 'They fall into ruins after 300 or 400 years.' Thereupon, [those present] agreed that books should be written in the name of Sultan Maḥmūd and [they] gave orders to compose the *Shāhnāme*. They promised al-Firdawsī for every verse one *mithqāl* of gold. When he finished [the work], [Maḥmūd's] vizier said: 'For a poet, one *mithqāl* of silver is enough for every verse.' The number of its verses was 60,000. Hence, the sultan sent 60,000 *mithqāl* of silver to al-Firdawsī, who was at that time in a public bath. He gave 20,000 as payment to the bath attendant, drank barley beer (*fuqqā'*) for 20,000, and gave 20,000 to the person who brought it. When the sultan heard [about this], he became angry with him and ordered that he be killed by painful torture. Al-Firdawsī thereupon went into hiding, composed a satiric poem (*hajw*) about the sultan, and in the middle of the night went to a treasurer [of the sultan] who was his friend. He asked him for the copy of the *Shāhnāme* to read it, took the book, wrote the satiric poem about Sultan Maḥmūd in it, and fled.

1109   D'hulster, Sitting 247, 249. See also section 6.3.4 below.
1110   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 19.
1111   Corresponding to 24 October 1505.
1112   This is the equivalent of 2 hours and 8 minutes.

One day, the sultan was on a hunt and called for the copy of the *Shāhnāme*. When he opened it, he saw in it the satiric poem about himself, became very angry, and ordered that his vizier be killed. Then, he sent 60,000 *mithqāl* of gold to the city [where] al-Firdawsī lived. When this money arrived at the gate of the city of Ṭūs, Firdawsī's coffin came out through another gate. Then, they offered this gold to his daughter, who did not accept it. Then, the sultan ordered that the money be spent on a building in memory of al-Firdawsī and they built a huge bridge which still exists."[1113]

This story, which is followed in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* by two other anecdotes about Maḥmūd of Ghazna likewise attributed to al-Ghawrī,[1114] presents already the original composition of the *Shāhnāme* as a sultan's attempt to immortalize his name. Thus, it not only reaffirms the connection between al-Ghawrī's patronage and recording his name for posterity, but also establishes a direct link between the earlier, much revered Turkic ruler Maḥmūd of Ghazna and the Mamluk sultan, both of whom were patrons of one version of the *Shāhnāme*.[1115] The fact that the story ended with a kind of ironic twist, given that, earlier, Maḥmūd of Ghazna had rejected the idea of erecting a building to memorialize himself, but was then forced to build a bridge that reminded everyone of his reprehensible behavior toward al-Firdawsī, and continued to do so at least up to late Mamluk times, does not seem to have been considered problematic in this context to the members of al-Ghawrī's court. Arguably, that aspect was overshadowed by the didactic and representational value of the anecdote, which portrayed the type of literary patronage al-Ghawrī engaged in as a praiseworthy trait in a ruler.

The fact that the same story also appears in a second, shorter version in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* corroborates that it circulated among the members of al-Ghawrī's court.[1116] Here, it is followed by a direct reference to the sultan's translation project.

Praise be to God! It is a grace that in the time of our lord, His Noble Station [that is, the sultan], al-Sharīf Ḥusayn, the chief *shaykh* in the al-

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1113   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 195–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 82–3. On this passage, see also Irwin, *Night* 442–3.

1114   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 196–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 82–4.

1115   On the positive image of Maḥmūd of Ghazna in later Islamicate literature, see section 6.2.1 below.

1116   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 28ᵛ.

> Mu'ayyadiyya Madrasa, translated [the work] with the help of God in His mercy from the Persian to the Turkic language in the noble name [of the sultan]—may his victory be glorious. This belongs also to the unique traits (*mufradāt*) of his reign.[1117]

This remark not only confirms what was previously known about the history of the translation,[1118] but also shows, yet again, how important this project was for the sultan's standing.

One wonders where the sultan and those around him learned about the story of Sultan Maḥmūd and his attempt to defraud al-Firdawsī of his promised reward. Whereas this story is quite famous and has circulated widely in Persian literature,[1119] it has not been possible to locate it in any Arabic text known to have been accessible to a late Mamluk readership. Even if an earlier Arabic version of the text comes to light at some point, it seems reasonable to suggest that here we are dealing with a Persian anecdote translated into Arabic in a late Mamluk courtly context.[1120] Although the history of premodern translations from Persian into Arabic has been little studied so far, we do know that such translations took place during the Mamluk period.[1121] Moreover, the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*—a work that was definitely translated from Persian— includes material on the origin and history of the *Shāhnāme* that is quite similar to the story found in *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[1122]

The Persian text that appears to have been the direct or indirect source of the anecdote about Maḥmūd and al-Firdawsī is Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Samarqandī's (d. after 556/1161) collection of anecdotes *Chahār maqāla* (Four discourses), which constitutes the oldest known work that includes this story.[1123] It appears there in a version very similar to that found in our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[1124] *Chahār maqāla*, whose author is better known as Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī, belonged to the Persian tradition of courtly literature[1125] and must have been well known to participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* who had Persianate

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1117   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 28ᵛ–29ʳ.

1118   Cf. section 3.3.2 above.

1119   On this story in Persian literature, see, e.g., Loewen, Patron 178–9; Bosworth, Mahmud 89; Khatibi, *Firdawsī*.

1120   Irwin, *Night* 442, likewise emphasizes that the story must have entered *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* from Persian literature.

1121   Cf. al-Musawi, *Republic* 36.

1122   Cf. Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1971–85.

1123   Bosworth, Mahmud 89. See also Loewen, Patron 178.

1124   Al-Samarqandī, *Chahār maqāla* 48–51.

1125   Meisami, Genres 258; de Bruijn, Courts 385–7.

cultural backgrounds, such as al-Sharīf. One of these members of al-Ghawrī's court society may also have told the sultan the anecdote and translated it for him into Arabic. The rather simple and pedestrian style of the Arabic in which the anecdote is presented likewise supports the assumption that this was an ad hoc translation from another language.

Both the translation of the *Shāhnāme* proper and the material related to its history are part of a broader phenomenon of multilingual literary and communicative practices at al-Ghawrī's court and in its larger social context. These practices include translations from Ottoman Turkish into Arabic, such as those attested to by the contents of al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*,[1126] the manuscript of *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa* produced for al-Ghawrī that is in three languages and combines ancient Arabic aphorisms with Persian and Turkic commentaries,[1127] and renditions of Arabic *fiqh* literature into Turkic languages on al-Ghawrī's behalf.[1128] Moreover, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* that include non-Arabic material attest as much to the court society's interest in the literary and linguistic heritage of other languages as do al-Ghawrī's own multilingual poetic activities and the claim that he knew seven languages.[1129] As Muhsin al-Musawi argued in a section of his *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters* entitled "Lexical Authentication of Imperial Rule," Islamicate rulers of the middle period who aspired to transregional hegemony had a vested interest in demonstrating their command of the languages spoken in the regions they sought to govern.[1130] Accordingly, we can interpret both the references to al-Ghawrī's polyglotism and the translations he commissioned as communicative strategies supporting his claim to be the "sultan of the Arabs and non-Arabs."[1131] Furthermore, the sultan's literary patronage projects can be understood as a strategy of "appropriation through translation." By having works of Turkic, Persian, and Arabic origins rendered into other languages on his behalf, al-Ghawrī affirmed his self-proclaimed right to domination over the cultural groups represented by these works.

1126   Cf. al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 151ʳ–170ʳ; 199ʳ–204ᵛ.

1127   Cf. section 3.3.2 above.

1128   Eckmann, Literature 314–5; Eckmann, Literatur 301. See also Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 42–3; and more broadly Lapidus, Patronage 176; Eckmann, Literature 312–9; Eckmann, Literatur 300–4; Haarmann, Arabic 90; Halasi, Sprachstudien 79–80; Flemming, Turks 717; al-Musawi, *Republic* 68–9; Irwin, Literature 3–6.

1129   Cf. section 3.2.7 above.

1130   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 76. See also Lefèvre, Majālis-i Jahāngīrī 273–5; Mauder, Legitimating.

1131   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1.

Taken together, when engaging with versified riddles or prose stories, the *majālis* provided not only sophisticated forms of entertainment to those participating in them, but were also of considerable communicative significance as courtly events that made statements about the status of al-Ghawrī and his court. Through the patronage of literature, the sultan aimed to immortalize his name, while his engagement with riddles was presented to posterity as a demonstration of his acumen. By quoting material associated with the ʿAbbasid court, members of al-Ghawrī's court established a textual relationship with the great Muslim rulers of the past. Similarly, the sultan's support for the translation of the *Shāhnāme* linked him to the ancient pre-Islamic rulers featured therein and to Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna, the original patron of the work. Moreover, the *Shāhnāme* project demonstrated that the Mamluks were a cultural force to be reckoned with, and that they participated and excelled in the same courtly cultural practices as their Ottoman or Safawid rivals. Finally, by translating and thus appropriating texts from other Islamicate literatures, al-Ghawrī buttressed his claims to suzerainty over other Islamicate rulers of his day.

4.2.6   *Prophetic Traditions and the Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*

According to our sources, information about the life, deeds, and sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad—either in the form of separate narrative units with chains of transmitters, that is, *ḥadīth*s, or as continuous narratives about Muḥammad's biography, that is, in the form of *sīra*—was not a particularly prominent topic in the *majālis*. Textual units that refer to these disciplines make up about 7 percent of the text of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, 6 percent of the content of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and 3 percent of that of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. The limited presence of *ḥadīth* and *sīra* material in our sources is somewhat surprising, given that Mamluk scholars are known for their lively engagement with these fields of knowledge, with *ḥadīth* studies being considered "the queen of religious sciences."[1132] Moreover, earlier publications showed that the field of *ḥadīth* studies was one of the scholarly areas in which Mamluk men of military background, such as al-Ghawrī, interacted most intensively with the scholarly elite.[1133] As is shown below, however, al-Ghawrī and those around him dealt with this kind of material in a very specific way that set them apart from mainstream approaches to Mamluk *ḥadīth* and *sīra* scholarship. This distinctive approach, at least in part, can also explain why these topics did not feature more prominently in the *majālis* discussions.[1134]

1132   Haarmann, *Arabic* 107.

1133   E.g., Mauder, *Krieger* 94–100; Berkey, *Transmission* 155–60.

1134   It is noteworthy that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* included discussions about prophetic tradi-

The specific ways our sources quote the material about Muḥammad's life, deeds, and sayings often makes it impossible to differentiate precisely between *ḥadīth* and *sīra* material. The feature that usually distinguishes *ḥadīth* from *sīra* material is the presence of full chains of transmission (sg. *isnād*), ideally traced back to the Prophet.[1135] Such complete *isnād*s, however, are entirely absent from our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. The only information the texts include sometimes about the origin of pertinent material is, though very rarely, the name of the oldest authority transmitting a *ḥadīth*—such as the Companion Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 78/697)[1136]—or, slightly more frequently, a reference to a written work. Here, the two canonical *Ṣaḥīḥ* works of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)[1137] and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875)[1138] are the most quoted texts.[1139] Moreover, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's commentary entitled *al-Fatḥ al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (The exhaustive achievement in commenting on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*) appears several times.[1140] There are no clear references to any of the collections of forty *ḥadīth*s that we know were part of al-Ghawrī's library.[1141] Works of *sīra* literature are generally referred to only in generic terms,[1142] with al-Bakrī's popular *sīra* text being the only clear exception.[1143] Again, works about the prophet's biography that we know were included in the sultan's library are not referred to.[1144]

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tions, particularly given that Petry, *Protectors* 161, suggested that al-Ghawrī was not interested in this field of learning and that Kennedy, *Caliphate* 161, underlines that it did not flourish in ʿAbbasid courtly contexts. Note, however, also Haṭiboğlu's and Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn's collections of *ḥadīth*s dedicated to al-Ghawrī discussed above.

1135 Brown, *Hadith* 13. See also Günther, *Quellenuntersuchungen* 53, 65.

1136 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 29.

1137 Cf., e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 28, 83; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 118–9; 152; 207, 253, 276, 306; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 7ᵛ; ii, fol. 1ᵛ.

1138 Cf., e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 75; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 153.

1139 On these works, see Brown, *Canonization*.

1140 Cf., e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 30; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 207.

1141 These collections include Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Armiyūnī's *Kitāb Arbaʿīn ḥadīthan fī faḍl sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 363 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 291; Flemming, Activities 258) and Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī's *Arbaʿūn ḥadīthan* preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 362 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 289).

1142 Cf., e.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 207; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 57ᵛ, 67ʳ, 68ʳ.

1143 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 7ᵛ. On this work, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 23–39; Robinson, *Historiography* 42–3; Katz, *Birth* 9–10 and *passim*.

1144 These works include, in addition to the work on the Prophet's genealogy that is attributed to the sultan and discussed in section 4.1.2.1 above, an anonymous Turkic

Given the absence of full *isnād*s, it is not always possible to determine whether a given piece of information is part of the *ḥadīth* or the *sīra* tradition. Moreover, such a differentiation would not necessarily reflect the approach that the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* followed when studying the Prophet Muḥammad's life. In at least two instances in our accounts of the *majālis*, material that clearly comes from works of both *ḥadīth* and *sīra* literature is analyzed together and weighed against each other.[1145] This suggests that the salon participants did not view these two fields as clear-cut and separate disciplines.[1146] The ways the attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* engaged with *ḥadīth* and *sīra* material are therefore discussed together here in one section. Reflecting the contents of our main sources, its focus lies on material that in other contexts might be categorized as prophetic traditions.

In our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, the absence of full *isnād*s indicates that the participants in these events studied *ḥadīth*s without focusing on their chains of transmitters. This is somewhat surprising, given that by Mamluk times, generations of scholars working on reports about Muḥammad and assessing their credibility had dedicated themselves primarily to examining the chains of transmitters that came with these traditions. In order to distinguish between authentic *ḥadīth*s and forged ones, these scholars developed a sophisticated, multistage procedure of scrutinizing the authenticity of a given report by analyzing who had conveyed it to whom, in what way, and under what circumstances. This scholarly tradition rested on a firm knowledge of the people appearing in *isnād*s and employed a highly specialized terminology that allowed for finely nuanced statements about the reliability of a given tradition.[1147]

This particular strategy in assessing the status of a given report led to a pronounced focus on *isnād*s in *ḥadīth* studies. Hence, "[i]t is often said that the validity of a tradition depends not on the text but on the *isnād*."[1148] Although

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work on the Prophet's ascension to heaven preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Koğuşlar 989 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Türkçe yazmalar kataloğu* ii, 108; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 261; Flemming, Activities 257) and an abridgment of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās' famous biography of the Prophet *Nūr al-ʿuyūn*, entitled *Talkhīṣ nūr al-ʿuyūn* and preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 3032 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 424; Ohta, Bindings 219; Atanasiu, Phénomène 259; Flemming, Activities 257).

1145   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 207–8; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ. See also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 151.

1146   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 470–1, likewise sees *sīra* and *ḥadīth* as belonging to the same category of learning.

1147   On how scholars assessed the reliability of reports, see Brown, *Hadith* 77–95.

1148   Robson, Ḥadīth 28. See also El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting* 23.

recent research showed that early Muslim ḥadīth scholars at times also scrutinized the actual text (*matn*) of a report to assess its reliability, the significance of such *matn*-centered approaches to the ḥadīth corpus was quite limited. Jonathan A.C. Brown sums up the state of research when he writes that "participants in the first four centuries of the Sunni ḥadīth tradition actively touted their obsession with the formal aspects of *isnād* criticism to the exclusion of any noteworthy interest in criticizing the contents of ḥadīths."[1149] Although Brown also shows that there is evidence that "early ḥadīth scholars employed content criticism far more often than would appear"[1150] and that open *matn* criticism became more common from the sixth/twelfth century onward,[1151] the study of the *matn*s of traditions seems to have remained generally of secondary importance in premodern ḥadīth scholarship when compared to the attention paid to their *isnād*s. Even scholars who took issue with the contents of a given tradition often focused their explicit criticism on its *isnād*, as the latter constituted the appropriate subject of critical evaluation.[1152]

This situation finds clear expression in ʿUthmān Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī's (d. 643/1245)[1153] famous *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-ḥadīth* (Knowledge of the types of the science of ḥadīth), better known as *al-Muqaddima fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* (Introduction to the sciences of ḥadīth). This work was extremely influential in the late middle period and beyond and can help us to better understand the significance of the discussions about prophetic traditions in al-Ghawrī's salons.[1154] Of the sixty-five sections of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's book, sixty deal exclusively or primarily with *isnād* criticism, its ancillary sciences, and technical aspects of the transmission of ḥadīth, whereas only five sections are mainly or entirely dedicated to questions of content analysis.[1155] Hence, it is more than evident where an influential ḥadīth scholar such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ located the primary focus of his discipline.

1149 Brown, How We Know 144.

1150 Brown, How We Know 145.

1151 Brown, How We Know 145. On this later tradition of *matn* critique, see Brown, How We Know 175–82; Brown, Rules 359; Brown, *Hadith* 99–100.

1152 Brown, How We Know 171–3. See also Brown, Rules 367; Brown, *Hadith* 98–9.

1153 On him, see Dickinson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 485; Robson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 927; Scheiner, Class 184.

1154 On the importance of the work, see Robson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 927; Robson, Ḥadīth 27; Brown, *Canonization* 283–4; Dickinson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 481; and for its presence in the Ottoman palace library, see Göktaş Collection 313–4, 327. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 471, mentions Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work as the first that should be known in the field of critical ḥadīth studies.

1155 For the contents of the work, see Scheiner, Class 184–5.

The absence of full *isnād*s in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* suggests that those participating in these events did not engage in the widespread scholarly practice of scrutinizing chains of transmission. Likewise, our sources do not attest to other forms of approaching the corpus of prophetic traditions, such as the, in the Mamluk period, very common practice of "collecting" chains of transmission going back to the Prophet Muḥammad with as few intermediary links as possible.[1156] Rather, when studying reports about the Prophet Muḥammad, the participants of al-Ghawrī's salons occupied themselves with discussions about the *matn*s of selected traditions, thereby participating in the not predominant, but growing tradition of *matn* analysis during the middle period.[1157]

When studying *matn*s, the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* hardly ever examined a single tradition by itself. Instead, they mostly took up traditions in pairs of reports that could be seen as contradicting each other. Usually, one participant narrated the two reports and then pointed out what aspects he considered contradictory—if he did not consider their contradictory character self-evident. Thereafter, he aked those present to suggest a way to achieve the harmonization (*tawfīq*) of the two traditions. Above, we reviewed an example in which two such traditions—on the love for a she-cat on the one hand and the love for the world on the other—were discussed in this way.[1158] Of the many cases included in our sources, three further examples deserve attention here.[1159]

The first example has the advantage that it is narrated in parallel, but clearly independent versions in *al-Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. The version in *al-Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* reads:

> **Sixth question:** The Messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him salvation—said: "Every important thing that is not begun with 'In the name of God' is defective (*abtar*)."[1160] He also said: "Every important thing

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1156   On this interest in short *isnād*s, see, e.g., Brown, *Hadith* 47–9; Witkam, High 129–40; Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 139–40; Gharaibeh, Brokerage 223, 228–30, 234–51; Davidson, *Carrying* 25–45; Dickinson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 481, 490–505.

1157   There is evidence that at the contemporaneous Ottoman court, *matn*s were also a central aspect of the study of prophetic traditions, cf. Göktaş, Collection 312–3.

1158   See section 3.1.5 above.

1159   For further examples, see al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 26; 50–1; 71–2, 88–9; 184–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 24; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 115–6, 119–20, 168–9, 192, 207–8, 262–3, 278. On the practice of interpreting *ḥadīth*s through other *ḥadīth*s, see also Blecher, *Said* 71–5, 101–2.

1160   This *ḥadīth* is not included in the six canonical Sunni books. However, it appears regularly in other works of Muslim scholarship, such as al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* i, 208.

that is not begun with 'Praise be to God' is mutilated (*ajdham*)."[1161] [Yet,] one can only begin with one of the two. In what way [can one achieve] a harmonization (*tawfīq*) of these two noble *ḥadīth*s?

Answer: Our lord the sultan said: "The meaning of 'beginning' can comprise both the real (*ḥaqīqī*) and the secondary (*iḍāfī*) beginning. Thus, the beginning with 'In the name of God' is the real beginning and [the one] with 'Praise be to God' the secondary one."

Seventh question: I said: "Why did you let 'In the name of God' precede 'Praise be to God' and not the other way around?"

Answer: Our lord the sultan said: "[I did this] in accordance with the ordering (*tartīb*) of the Book of God, because there, 'In the name of God' is mentioned first and [only] then [does] 'Praise be to God' [follow]."[1162]

The version in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is as follows:

Question: It is mentioned in the noble *ḥadīth* "Every important thing that is not begun with 'In the name of God' is defective." And it is mentioned: "Every important thing that is not begun with 'Praise be to God' is mutilated." There can be no doubt that one can only begin with one of the two. In what way [can one achieve] a harmonization between the two [traditions]?

Answer: The beginning with 'In the name of God' is the real beginning and the beginning with 'Praise be to God' is the secondary one. If it is said: How do you know that it is not the other way around, that is, that the real beginning is the one with 'Praise be to God' and the secondary [beginning is] the one with 'In the name of God'? Then we say: We follow the speech of God, because in the magnificent Quran, which the trustworthy spirit sent down on his Prophet, the lord of the Messengers, the beginning is with 'In the name of God.'[1163]

In this case, two traditions stipulating how Muslims should begin every significant undertaking were understood as contradictory. In the *majālis*, however, a solution was presented as to how these two traditions could both be considered authoritative at the same time: Rather than demanding the impossible, namely that Muslims should commence significant actions with the *basmala* and the

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1161 This *ḥadīth* is not included in the six canonical Sunni books. A version that varies slightly is, e.g., Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Adab*, no. 4840.

1162 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 37–8.

1163 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 144–5.

taḥmīd at the same time, the harmonization prioritized the *basmala* over the *taḥmīd* without refuting either of the two traditions. This resolution took the Quranic text as a model and stipulated that the *basmala* should precede the *taḥmīd*. It is noteworthy that *al-Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* credits al-Ghawrī with arriving at this answer, whereas in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the participants in the debate remain unnamed.

In the second example, *al-Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* attributes again the sultan with explaining how two seemingly conflicting traditions could be harmonized:

> **First question:** It is mentioned in the tradition (*athar*)[1164] that the first thing a human being will be asked about at the resurrection is the shedding of blood,[1165] and it is also mentioned that the first thing a human being will be asked about is the ritual prayer.[1166] In what way [can one achieve] a harmonization of these two *ḥadīth*s?
>
> **Answer:** Our lord the sultan said: "It is possible to say (*yumkinu an yuqāla*) that the first thing that he is asked with regard to the rights of God (*ḥuqūq Allāh*) is the ritual prayer and the first thing he is asked with regard to the rights of the people (*ḥuqūq al-nās*) is the shedding of blood."[1167]

Again, the sultan is presented as devising a solution that acknowledges both *ḥadīth*s as valid, while at the same time mitigating their perceived contradiction. It is noteworthy, however, that the sultan's solution is introduced in very moderate words in the source by "it is possible to say" (*yumkinu an yuqāla*), suggesting that this solution is only one of multiple conceivable ones. Hence, here the harmonization of seemingly conflicting traditions is presented as an enterprise that does not necessarily lead to unequivocal answers.

The third example, this time from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, reads:

> **Question:** It is mentioned in al-Bukhārī that whoever says "There is no god but God" does not enter the fire,[1168] although it is mentioned in *al-*

1164   On *athar* as partly synonymous with *ḥadīth*, see Robson, Ḥadīth 23.

1165   This *ḥadīth* is not included in this form in the six canonical Sunni books. A slightly different version can be found, e.g., in al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan, Kitāb Tarḥīm al-dam*, no. 3993.

1166   This *ḥadīth* is not included in this form in the six canonical Sunni books. A slightly different version can be found, e.g., in al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan, Kitāb Tarḥīm al-dam*, no. 3991.

1167   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 84.

1168   This *ḥadīth* is not included in this form in the six canonical Sunni books. A slightly different version can be found in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb Badʿ al-khalq*, no. 3222.

> *Ṣaḥīḥ* "A part of my community enters the fire and leaves [it] through my intercession."[1169] What is the harmonization of the two?
>
> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "They do not enter the fire that is the place of the unbelievers […]."[1170]

In this case, two *ḥadīth*s, both of which come with the highest possible credentials in terms of their authenticity, seem to be at odds with one another regarding the question of whether or not Muslims enter hell or "the fire," as it is called. While one tradition promises that everyone who utters the first part of the Islamic profession of faith is spared hell, the second tradition indicates that some Muslims do indeed enter hell, only to leave it with the Prophet Muḥammad's intercession. The solution to this dilemma, again attributed to the sultan, is based on a differentiation between what is meant by "the fire": While the first tradition speaks about the fire that awaits unbelievers, the second one refers to a different type of hell reserved for a part of the Muslim community. Thus, the authenticity of the two traditions is maintained. This is typical, as there is not a single case in our sources on the *majālis* in which the participants reject a tradition because it contradicts another one. The end of the debate was clearly the harmonization, not the elimination of conflicting *ḥadīth*s.

This kind of engagement with the corpus of prophetic traditions, although much less common than the critical analysis of *isnād*s, is not without precedent. From the early Islamic period onward, attempts to harmonize *ḥadīth*s were one way of dealing with the fact that numerous reports about the deeds and sayings of the Prophet seemed to oppose one another. Harmonizing such traditions could offer an alternative to the rigorous scrutinization of chains of transmissions usually employed to deal with problematic traditions.[1171] In numerous of his writings including his most influential *al-Risāla* (The epistle),[1172] Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) exhibited "an overriding desire to defend the authenticity of the greatest number of ḥadīth"[1173] and hence argued that scholars should do their best to harmonize seemingly problematic traditions. In his work *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth* (The disagreement in the *ḥadīth* corpus),

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1169 This *ḥadīth* is not included in this form in the six canonical Sunni books. A slightly different version can be found in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Riqāq*, no. 6566.

1170 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 306. For a perceived contradiction between two similar traditions, see Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl* 184–5.

1171 Dickinson, *Development* 5–7.

1172 On the treatment of problematic traditions, see al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Risāla* 210–342.

1173 Dickinson, *Development* 6.

that, as its title indicates, deals primarily with apparent contradictions in legally relevant prophetic traditions, al-Shāfiʿī stipulated: "If it is possible that two [apparently contradictory] traditions be used together, they should be used together [...]. [Only] if two traditions can only be [understood] as contradictory [...], then one is the abrogating one and the other [one is] the abrogated one."[1174] The solutions advocated in our *majālis* sources followed the first part of the rule, and there is not a single case in which one of the salon members argued that one tradition abrogated the other.

Ḥadīth harmonization as outlined by al-Shāfiʿī was practiced by later scholars.[1175] ʿAbdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) was one of the most famous authors to participate in this scholarly project with the corpus of prophetic traditions. His *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* (Interpretation of what is contradictory in the *ḥadīth* corpus) remained the classical study on the topic for centuries[1176] and was the only book on contradictory traditions to be mentioned in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*.[1177] Later, attempts to harmonize seemingly contradictory traditions became part of more general works of *ḥadīth* commentary,[1178] which often combined *isnād* and *matn* analysis.[1179] For example, al-Nawawī regarded the harmonization of seemingly conflicting traditions as one of his five main concerns in commenting on *ḥadīth*s, next to the study of textual variants, the analysis of chains of transmission, the discussion of legal implications, and the examination of broader legal contexts.[1180]

The harmonization of *ḥadīth*s remained part of the scholarly occupation with prophetic traditions, as is also attested by chapter 36 of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's aforementioned work that includes a brief discussion of how to proceed in the case of seemingly conflicting traditions. According to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, such traditions are of two kinds, the first of which he describes as follows: "It is possible to combine (*jamʿ*) the two *ḥadīth*s and it is not unfeasible to find a way (*wajh*)

1174   Al-Shāfiʿī, *Ikhtilāf* 64. Translation partly quoting Dickinson, *Development* 6. See also Brown, *Hadith* 164; Brown, How We Know 183–4; Brown, Prophet 276; El Shamsy, *Canonization* 76–7, 80, 176, 199–201. On *ḥadīth* abrogation, see, e.g., Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 380–3; Brown, *Hadith* 162; Robson, Ḥadīth 28.

1175   See Dickinson, *Development* 6, for scholars and their pertinent works in this field. On the early tradition of *ḥadīth* harmonization, see Lecomte, Exemple. See also Goldziher, *Studien* ii, 83–6, 136–7.

1176   On this work, see Lecomte (trans.), *Le traité*.

1177   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 391.

1178   On *ḥadīth* harmonization as *ḥadīth* commentary, see Dickinson, *Development* 7.

1179   On this genre, see, e.g., Brown, *Hadith* 52–4; Blecher, *Said*; Blecher, Ḥadīth Commentary; Blecher, Presence.

1180   Calder, *Jurisprudence* 108–9.

to remove what is mutually contradictory between them. Then, it is incumbent to proceed in this [way] and [base] one's doctrine (*qawl*) on both of them together."[1181] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ therafter discusses an example of three traditions that might be seen as contradictory and comes up with a harmonization that closely resembles those found in our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[1182] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's second type consists of traditions that are so contradictory (*yataḍāddā*) that a combination (*jamʿ*) is impossible. Again, these fall into two categories: Either one *ḥadīth* abrogates the other or there is no evidence for abrogation. In the latter case, one must resort to *isnād* critique to find out which of the *ḥadīth*s is preferable.[1183]

Thus, although we see that *ḥadīth* harmonization was an accepted, though not very prominent field of *ḥadīth* studies, the question of why al-Ghawrī and the participants in his *majālis* occupied themselves almost exclusively with precisely this type of *ḥadīth* scholarship remains. Several, in part mutually non-exclusive answers are possible.

First, we could argue that the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* lacked the necessary competence to assess *isnād*s and therefore they focused on *matn*s. While this might be true for al-Ghawrī himself, who, as far as we know, never received a thorough introduction to the study of *ḥadīth*s, many of the other members, and especially the high-ranking scholarly participants, had a solid grounding in *ḥadīth* studies and would have been able to engage in *isnād* critique. For example, Maḥmūd al-Khalīlī, who engaged with al-Sharīf in the discussion about the status of Joseph's brothers, acted later in his career as *shaykh* of the Dār al-Ḥadīth in Damascus, and Ibn Ajā, the sultan's private secretary, authored a treatise on *ḥadīth* studies.

Second, many key members of the *majālis*, including Sultan al-Ghawrī himself, were members of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*. In general, especially early Ḥanafīs were known to be less interested in prophetic traditions than were members of the other schools, as they relied more on reason and less on transmitted knowledge in their engagement with the law than, for example, Ḥanbalī or Shāfiʿī scholars.[1184] Hence, the allegiance of many important attendees of the *majālis* to the Ḥanafī school might explain why the study of *ḥadīth* did not play a more significant role during these events. Moreover, early members of this school were known to emphasize content analysis as a key method in the assessment

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1181   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 390.

1182   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 390–1.

1183   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 391.

1184   Brown, *Hadith* 151, 154–5. See also Brown, *Canonization* 49, 146–7, 209; Blecher, *Said* 101.

of *ḥadīth*s.[1185] The high level of attention that the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* paid to *matn* critique might reflect this Ḥanafī focus. However, the fact that the history of Ḥanafī *ḥadīth* scholarship in the Mamluk period has received only very little scholarly attention should caution us against overemphasizing the explanatory power of what is known about early Ḥanafī engagement with *ḥadīth* when examining developments of al-Ghawrī's time.[1186]

Third, one of the fundamental functions of the *majālis* was to provide intellectual entertainment. Although it is difficult to discern what people who lived half a millenium ago in a different social context might have found entertaining, it is possible that harmonizing seemingly contradictory *ḥadīth*s was perceived as more intellectually stimulating than the analysis of chains of transmitters, especially by those participants of the *majālis* who were not professional *ḥadīth* scholars.

Fourth, by engaging in the harmonization of *ḥadīth*, the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* participated in the growing subfield of *matn* analysis, which was typical of the late middle period. This increase in attention to the *matn*s of traditions found its expression, among other things, in the genre of *ḥadīth* commentaries blossoming during the Mamluk period. Works like Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *al-Fatḥ al-bārī*, which participants in the *majālis* referred to, represented the state of the field and regularly paid attention to *ḥadīth* harmonization. By doing the same, the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* demonstrated that they had kept abreast with recent scholarly developments. Just as in other fields of knowledge, the debates about *ḥadīth* in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* dealt with what were, to contemporaries, relevant questions and found solutions to problems that were also addressed in the technical scholarly literature of the Mamluk period. In *ḥadīth* studies as in other fields, the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* demonstrated that they could contribute to the current scholarly discussions of their day.

Fifth, the fact that influential authors viewed *ḥadīth* harmonization as a particularly demanding intellectual activity might have contributed to its attractiveness to the *majālis* attendees. As Brown notes, early authors compared the ability to assess a *ḥadīth* based on its content only "to that of a moneychanger

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1185   Brown, *Hadith* 104.
1186   For what is known about Ḥanafī *ḥadīth* scholarship during the late middle period, see, e.g., Ghani, Justifying; Al-Azem, *Rule-Formulation*, *passim*; Pfeifer, Culture, esp. 39–40. I thank Mohammad Gharaibeh (Berlin) for pointing me to Al-Azem's publication. On the development of Ḥanafī thought about the importance of *ḥadīth*s, see also El Shamsy, *Canonization* 49–55, 201–7; Brown, *Canonization* 136–7, 146–7, 184–7, 209, 226–7, 235–9, 364–5.

intuitively knowing a counterfeit coin."[1187] At the very beginning of his chapter on the study of seemingly contradictory traditions, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes: "Only the leading authorities (*aʾimma*) who combine the following skills reach perfection in performing [the analysis of contradictory *ḥadīth*s]: [Mastery] in *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* studies as well as submersion in [the knowledge] of the precise meanings of words."[1188] Accordingly, in the middle period only people who were well-versed in jurisprudence, the study of prophetic traditions, and Arabic lexicography were seen as being able to reach a high level of competence in dealing with traditions seemingly at odds with each other. Thus, the study and harmonization of conflicting *ḥadīth*s was perceived as an activity for expert scholars only. In light of this evidence, we can interpret the fact that the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* engaged in *ḥadīth* criticism as part of a communicative strategy that aimed at demonstrating their erudition. By pursuing one of the most difficult and sophisticated subfields of *ḥadīth* studies, the members of the sultan's circle made a communicative statement about their own scholarly status.

Throughout our sources, the sultan is presented as a central figure in these debates. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, he provides the solution to all but one case in which traditions seemingly contradict each other.[1189] In *al-Kawkab al-durrī* the extent of the sultan's participation in these discussions is less, but still significant, with the sultan providing the solutions to four of eleven cases.[1190] Thus, both works suggest that the sultan was particularly successful in finding ways to harmonize traditions. They thereby make an implicit statement about his acumen, wisdom, and erudition. Given our findings about the authors' intentions to present al-Ghawrī in a positive light as much as possible and about the textual independence of the two texts,[1191] it is not easy to determine whether we are dealing here with a narrative strategy employed by the authors of our sources, or a representative strategy applied and performed by the sultan during his *majālis*.[1192] It is possible that the truth lies somewhere in between, with the sultan trying to demonstrate his skills in *ḥadīth*

1187   Brown, *Rules* 365.

1188   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Maʿrifa* 390.

1189   The exception is al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 184–5, where the sultan is credited with posing the problem.

1190   In addition to the material given above, see Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 116, 192, 262–3.

1191   See sections 3.1.1.3, 3.1.2.3, and 3.1.5 above.

1192   I thank Mohammad Gharaibeh (Berlin) for pointing out the significance of this observation.

harmonization during the *majālis* and the authors of the accounts of these events paying special attention to his achievements.

We should not try to understand the instances in which our sources narrate that the sultan was successful in harmonizing *ḥadīth*s in isolation, given that the texts present the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as solving apparent contradictions between religiously significant texts in several other situations, too. Both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*[1193] and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*[1194] include accounts of an albeit quite limited number of debates in which *majālis* members reconciled what they considered conflicting statements found in *ḥadīth*s on the one hand and the Quran on the other. Again, the sultan figures prominently in these discussions; he finds 50 percent of the solutions in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and 63 percent in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. A very similar picture emerges from instances in which the *majālis* participants attempted to harmonize seemingly conflicting passages of the Quran. In both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*[1195] and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*,[1196] the sultan again appears as a central figure in these debates, and is credited with 50 percent and 64 percent of the solutions in the two works, respectively. As in the case of solving riddles, our texts thus cast the sultan in the role of a hermeneutical key when it comes to the harmonization of seemingly conflicting religious texts. Given how often this motif appears, the sultan's ability to reconcile contradictions was apparently an important aspect of his self-representation as a learned, wise, and perfect ruler who embodied in himself a scholarly type of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Thus, we see that even what is, initially, an inconspicuous activity like the harmonization of seemingly contradictory *ḥadīth*s could have broader implications for Mamluk court culture and the representation of rule at al-Ghawrī's court.[1197]

4.2.7   *History*

Our three main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* are quite different from one another with regard to the prominence they accord to history (*tārīkh*) as a field of learning.[1198] In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, historical material makes up just 8 percent and 2 percent of the contents, respectively.

1193   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 92–3, 184.

1194   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 17–9, 98–9, 104–5, 120, 162–3, 201–2, 218–9, 268–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–4.

1195   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 84–5, 89.

1196   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 95–8, 105, 134–5, 140–1, 161–2, 222–3, 266, 276, 282–3, 305.

1197   On the comparable case of a ʿAbbasid caliph using his competence in *ḥadīth* studies to legitimate his rule, see Hartmann, Wollte 182–3; Hartmann, *Politik* 206–32.

1198   On engagement with history in the *majālis*, see also Mauder, Read, which discusses

The extant parts of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, however, are primarily historical in character, with passages dealing with *tārīkh* material amounting to 68 percent of the preserved parts of the work. This is hardly surprising, given that the contents of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are arranged according to topic and that only the parts of the work dealing with history have reached us. Clearly, if the work had survived in its entirety—provided it was finished according to its original plan—the picture would be quite different, as discussed above.[1199] Nevertheless, it seems clear that history played a not insignificant role in the learned life of al-Ghawrī's court society, given that historical topics also feature prominently in al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*.[1200] Moreover, the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* written for al-Ghawrī includes the following passage on his salons:

> The books of history (*tevārīh*), narratives (*ḥikāyāt*), and tales (*ahbār*)
> Are all read again in his gathering (*ṣoḥbetinde*).[1201]

It is no coincidence that this passage mentions books of history together with less clearly defined types of texts such as "narratives" and "tales." As seen above, in the absence of explicit information regarding the type of material dealt with in a given passage, it is not always easy to decide whether or not members of al-Ghawrī's court considered a certain prose narrative part of the field of *tārīkh*.[1202]

Much of the historical material in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* came from written works that, according to our sources, were read aloud during the *majālis* and then commented on by those present. This is clearly illustrated in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, which refers numerous times to historical information being presented from unnamed books of history (sg. *tārīkh*)[1203] and in two cases, notes sessions in which those present "read in this night books of history (*tawārīkh*)."[1204] We also know that al-Ghawrī's library included historical works, but at this point there is no evidence for a direct link between these library holdings and the readings in the sultan's *majālis*.[1205]

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some of the material also analyzed below; and on history as a scholarly discipline in the late middle period, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 201–17.

1199 Cf. section 3.1.3.2 above.

1200 Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 72–143ʳ.

1201 Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1993.

1202 Cf. section 4.2.5 above.

1203 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 213–4, 235, 251, 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 114, 128, 132.

1204 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 215, 251; (ed. ʿAzzām) 128.

1205 Pertinent works include an autograph copy of ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-

Reading and commenting on historical works was a common practice in courtly contexts in and beyond the Islamicate world. Medieval European court societies spent evenings reading books of history,[1206] and Arabic sources report similar activities for early Islamic rulers such as the Umayyads.[1207] In Mamluk times, several sultans, including Baybars[1208] and Barsbāy,[1209] are said to have listened to extensive readings of historical works. Didactic considerations and an appreciation of the educational value of history were often the motivations behind such practices,[1210] although we should also not underestimate the aesthetic value of accounts of the past and their entertainment functions.

One of the works particularly favored by the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* was Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) biographical dictionary *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*; quotations from this text appear repeatedly in the *majālis* accounts.[1211] A typical case is the following story, which is included in similar forms in both *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. In the former work, it reads:[1212]

> **Strange incident (*gharība*):** It is said in the book of history (*al-tārīkh*): Fārābī entered Sayf al-Dawla's *majlis*. The ruler said to him: "Sit down!" He asked: "Shall I sit down in my place (*makānī*) or in your place?" [The ruler] said: "Sit down in your place." Thereupon, he sat [in a place] above all [others] so that he dislodged Sayf al-Dawla from [his] throne (*sarīr*).
>
> **Admonishment (*taʾdīb*):** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Al-Fārābī did not behave well [here], because he deemed it necessary to deal impolitely (*qillat al-adab*) with the shadow of God [on Earth]."
>
> [The story continues:] Thereupon, Sayf al-Dawla's *mamlūk*s wanted to kill al-Fārābī. They said to each other in Persian: "This man is impolite

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Ḥanafī's *Manāqib al-khulafāʾ al-arbaʿa* preserved as MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2823 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 436; Flemming, Activities 255) and a copy of Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn al-Ṭūlūnī al-Ḥanafī's *Nuzhat al-abṣār fī manāqib al-aʾimma al-arbaʿa al-akhyār* preserved as MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Fatih 4517 (see Flemming, Activities 254; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 39).

1206 Paravicini, Strukturen 6; Paravicini, Einführung 17; Lake, Intention 349.
1207 Khalidi, *Thought* 84.
1208 Troadec, Baybars 117, 146.
1209 Irwin, History 159. On the interests of the Mamluk military elite in history, see Mauder, *Krieger* 143–9.
1210 Paravicini, Einführung 7. See also Fried, Netzen 159.
1211 Cf. section 3.1.3.3 above. On the importance of this work for the *majālis* debates, see also Mauder, Read.
1212 For the corresponding passage, see Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 22ᵛ–22ʳ.

and feeble-minded (*khafīf al-ʿaql*)." Al-Fārābī said to them in Persian: "Be patient, for deeds should be judged according to their outcomes (*innamā l-aʿmāl bi-l-khawātīm*)!" Then, he debated with the scholars of the *majlis* and overcame them all. Sayf al-Dawla was amazed by his attitude and his awe-inspiring appearance (*min hayʾatihi wa-haybatihi*) and said to him: "[Do you want to] eat a bite?" [Al-Fārābī] said: "No." [Sayf al-Dawla] asked: "[Do you want to] listen to a song (*naghma*)?" [Al-Fārābī] said: "Yes." [Sayf al-Dawla] thereupon had musicians brought in, but al-Fārābī did not like their performance and said: "If you would grant us permission, we would play a little." They said: "It is all right." Then, [al-Fārābī] took out a piece of wood, fastened strings on it and [began to] play. Thereupon, all the people of the *majlis* laughed. Thereafter, he played [again] and they cried. Consequently, Sayf al-Dawla assigned him [a stipend of] two *dīnār*s per day. Al-Fārābī died in Syria.

Wise saying (*ḥikma*): His Excellency, the sultan said: "The only thing that saved al-Fārābī from being killed in Sayf al-Dawla's [*majlis*] was [his knowledge] of the Persian language. Therefore, it is said: 'Language is a human being's second personality (*al-lisān maʿa al-insān shakhṣ thānī*).'"[1213]

This passage enables us to make several observations about how al-Ghawrī and the members of his *majālis* engaged with history. First, when comparing the original text about al-Fārābī in Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*[1214]—the "book of history" mentioned in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*—to that of the latter work, we note that only a rather small fraction of al-Fārābī's entire biography is quoted. It is unclear whether other parts of Ibn Khallikān's account of al-Fārābī's life were not read aloud in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, or were simply not included in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Al-Sharīf might have decided to narrate only those parts of al-Fārābī's biography that al-Ghawrī commented on, as he thought these deserved special attention.

Second, a comparison of the versions of this encounter as it appears in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* shows that al-Sharīf did not simply copy the text, rather he abridged and rephrased it considerably. While the basic story is still the same, there are so many differences in terms of vocabulary and language that it seems plausible that al-Sharīf did not copy the text

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1213   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 251–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 128–9. On this story in the *majālis*, see also Mauder, Read.
1214   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* v, 153–7.

from a written *Vorlage*, but rather renarrated it after hearing it in al-Ghawrī's *majlis*. The parallel passage in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* that also narrates the same story differs considerably in terms of wording and style from the versions in *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and therefore supports the assumption that the story was not copied, but entered both *majālis* accounts through an intermediate stage of oral transmission.

Why was this part of Ibn Khallikān's biography of al-Fārābī so interesting to the participants of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* that it was read aloud during these courtly events, commented upon, and later renarrated in two works based on their proceedings? Arguably, the story of al-Fārābī in Sayf al-Dawla's *majlis* was particularly meaningful to al-Ghawrī and those around him because it so closely mirrored, and thus legitimated, their own courtly practices. According to the story, al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were very similar to those of the famous Hamdanid ruler Sayf al-Dawla (r. 333–56/945–67): both the Mamluk and the Hamdanid court featured learned discussions alongside the consumption of food and musical performances that were attended by scholars, musicians, and *mamlūk*s. Moreover, Sayf al-Dawla appears in this story as a generous and forgiving patron of scholarship—an image that fits in well with al-Ghawrī's vision of himself that he wished to communicate to his court society. Thus, it is not surprising that in one of his comments, al-Ghawrī referred to Sayf al-Dawla as the "shadow of God [on Earth]"—a title that was used for the Mamluk ruler, too.[1215] Hence, al-Ghawrī's remark that one should not deal impolitely with a person of Sayf al-Dawla's rank was also a rather thinly veiled statement about how the sultan expected the members of his court society to behave. Moreover, for those around the sultan and especially for the scholars in his circle, the story of al-Fārābī offered an opportunity to identify with a celebrated scholar who had, in the past, attended a ruler's *majlis*.

Following this line of argumentation, we can also see why Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, of all the works of history available to late Mamluk readerships, drew considerable attention from the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. As a work of history, it provided instruction about bygone times and offered role models for emulation.[1216] However, this would have applied to many other texts as well and thus cannot have been the deciding factor in favor of *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, although we must keep in mind that *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* was one of the most widely-read historical works of the late middle period and therefore

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1215   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 72, 168; (ed. ʿAzzām) 64; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 294.

1216   On *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* as a work of history, cf. Khalidi, *Thought* 206–7.

had a better chance of attracting the attention of al-Ghawrī's court society than many other historical texts.[1217]

Wafayāt al-aʿyān was particularly well-suited to fulfill the court society's educational requirements and at the same time provide the kind of entertainment that al-Ghawrī and those around him sought in the sultan's salons. As Hartmut Fähndrich noted, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* consists to a considerable degree of "a mixture of educational and entertaining material or educational material presented as entertainment."[1218] Thus, Fähndrich speaks of the work as "a biographical dictionary with numerous features that are common to *adab*-works."[1219] This is especially evident in the anecdotes used by Ibn Khallikān to characterize the subjects of his biographies.[1220] Moreover, in terms of its contents, the work presents, according to Fähndrich, "a 'Reader's Digest'-knowledge of Islamic civilization. [...] [M]any a biography in the *Wafayāt* becomes an entertaining chapter on Islamic civilization."[1221] As a historical text fulfilling literary and aesthetic expectations, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* was particularly well-suited to provide the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* with a vision of Islamic history that they could relate to.

Thus, while Ibn Khallikān's work was highly valued by the attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* because it matched the aesthetics of knowledge typical for these events, other historical texts were read aloud and discussed because they were of direct personal importance to participants in these events. This applied not only to the sultan, as the example of a long passage in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* on Tīmūr Lang's invasion of Syria shows. It begins as follows:

> **Question:** When Timur Lank [*sic*] came to Aleppo, he gathered the scholars and asked them: "Among us and among you, [people] have been killed in the fighting during the conquest of the city. Do those who have been killed among us or those killed among you belong to the martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*)?"
>
> **Answer:** The grandfather of the Ḥanafī chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna said: "'I will reply to this with the reply of our Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation.' My friend Sharaf al-Dīn al-Anṣārī said to me: 'This

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1217 Cf. Pauliny, Anekdote 142; Fähndrich, *Man* 16–9, 21.

1218 Fähndrich, Approach 437. See also Pauliny, Anekdote 143–4.

1219 Fähndrich, Approach 437. See also Fähndrich, Approach 439–40; Fähndrich, Begriff 340–1; Pauliny, Anekdote, esp. 146–56; Fähndrich, *Man* 28, 33–6, 211.

1220 Fähndrich, Approach 438–9. See also Fähndrich, Approach 441–5; Fähndrich, Caliph; Fähndrich, *Man, passim*.

1221 Fähndrich, Approach 441. See also Pauliny, Anekdote 142–3; al-Qadi, Alternative History 45–6, 69–70; Fähndrich, *Man* 37–9.

reply did not come to my mind,' although [Sharaf al-Dīn]—may God have mercy on him—was the leading *ḥadīth* scholar of his time (*muḥaddith zamanihi*). Timur Lank turned his ear and eye to me and said: 'How was the Messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him salvation— asked [this question] and how did he reply?' I said: 'A Bedouin came to our Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—and said: 'Oh Messenger of God, a man [from among us] fights to defend himself, [another man] fights out of courage, and [a third man] fights to demonstrate his rank. Which of us [fights] in the way of God (*fī sabīl Allāh*)?' [The Prophet]—may God bless him and grant him salvation—said: 'He who fights so that the word of God may be exalted is a martyr.'[1222] Timur Lank thereupon said: 'Good (*khūb*)!' ʿAbd al-Jabbār[1223] said: 'This means: 'How well have you spoken!''

The gate of familiarity was thus opened and [Timur] said: 'I am just half a man,[1224] but have conquered this and that land'—and he enumerated all the kingdoms of Iraq, Persia, and India, and all the lands of the Tatars. I said: 'Be thankful for this grace by pardoning these *imām*s and do not kill anyone.' He said: 'By God, I do not kill anyone on purpose. You have [rather] killed yourself by [closing] the gates [of your city]! [Yet,] by God, I will not kill anyone from among you. You and your belongings are secure.'"[1225]

This story deals with one of the most upsetting events in the history of the Mamluk Sultanate. In 803/1400, the invading forces of Tīmūr Lang penetrated into Mamluk territory and conquered the city of Aleppo after a short siege together with other Syrian cities, thus threatening the very existence of the Mamluk polity.[1226] These events, which in general must have been known to all learned members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, form the background of our story. Here, Tīmūr Lang presents the scholars of Aleppo with a question that he had, according to other sources, already posed to the *ʿulamāʾ* of other cities, though without ever receiving a satisfying answer.[1227] Their dilemma is obvious: If the

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1222   This tradition is not included in the six canonical Sunni collections.

1223   ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. ʿAbdallāh al-Muʿtazilī (d. 805/1403), a scholar close to Tīmūr Lang who accompanied him on his campaigns, cf. Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* 214 (editor's note).

1224   This refers to Tīmūr's being physically handicapped.

1225   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ms) 205–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68–9.

1226   Cf. Nagel, *Timur* 327–8. On Tīmūr's Syrian campaign, see Nagel, *Timur* 325–44; Ibn al-Shiḥna, *Rawḍat al-manāẓir*, fols. 117ᵛ–118ʳ.

1227   Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* 214.

scholars declared that the fallen soldiers from their side were martyrs, it would enrage Tīmūr. And if they accorded this status to Tīmūr's men, it would be a betrayal of their own side. In either case, the outcome would be unpleasant for them, to say the least.

According to the story narrated, the grandfather of the Ḥanafī chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna, who also appears as the first-person narrator of most of the anecdote, produced an answer that demonstrated not only his cleverness, but also his erudition: He quoted a prophetic tradition according to which martyrs were only those who fought for God's word. When he was then complimented by Tīmūr, Ibn al-Shiḥna's grandfather seized the favorable opportunity and asked him to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of Aleppo, and this was granted.[1228]

The story corresponds almost verbatim to a passage in a work by Zayn al-Dīn Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad b. Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 815/1412)—the grandfather of al-Ghawrī's Ḥanafī chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna—entitled *Rawḍat al-manāẓir fī ʿilm al-awāʾil wa-l-awākhir* (The garden of sceneries about the knowledge of the ancients and moderns).[1229] This work is an abridgment and continuation of Abū l-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl al-Ḥamawī's (d. 732/1331) work, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī tārīkh al-bashar* (A short history of humankind) that covers events up to the year 806/1403.[1230] Toward the end of this work, Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna provides an eyewitness account of Tīmūr's conquest of Aleppo that later became part of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ʿArabshāh's (d. 854/1450) famous *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr fī nawāʾib Tīmūr* (The wonders of fate regarding the calamities of Tīmūr).[1231]

In quoting the story, the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* must have used a written *Vorlage*—most probably either Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna's original work or, possibly, the passage quoted from this text in Ibn ʿArabshāh.[1232] Nevertheless, he did not copy the text without changes: Alongside minor deletions, abridgments, and changes, he also added that the first-person narrator mentioned therein was "the grandfather of the Ḥanafī chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna." Thereby, he established a direct connection between the protagon-

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1228   The population of Aleppo was not spared by Tīmūr's troops, cf. Nagel, *Timur* 328.

1229   The edition of this text printed in the margins of the 1870 Būlāq edition of Ibn Athīr's *al-Kāmil* was not accessible to me. Therefore I used MS Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Orient. A 1573, here Ibn al-Shiḥna, *Rawḍat al-manāẓir*, fols. 118ʳ–118ᵛ.

1230   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 178.

1231   The corresponding section can be found in Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* 214–5.

1232   Ibn al-Shiḥna's *Rawḍat al-manāẓir* is a more likely source than Ibn ʿArabshāh's *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* as in the latter work, Tīmūr says "Good!" twice, while in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Rawḍat al-manāẓir*, he does so only once.

ist of the quoted historical anecdote and one of the most high-ranking participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* who would certainly profit from his ancestor's positive image in this text. When viewed from the perspective of the *majālis* as historical events, the attention paid to the role of Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna in the sultan's salons can best be explained if we assume that high-ranking attendees such as ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna could influence the agenda of these meetings. According to this interpretation, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna would have ensured that the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were acquainted with his grandfather's exploits by suggesting one of the texts on Tīmūr's conquest of Aleppo as historical reading material for the circle, assuming he did not actually read it aloud himself. Given that the text dealt with the interaction between a famous ruler and an accomplished scholar, the other members of the *majālis* probably did not disapprove of its presentation, since this topic was of general interest to them. On a textual level, the inclusion of this lengthy section on ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's grandfather in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which provided its readers with only the highlights of the *majālis* proceedings, should be understood in the context of its author's attempt to secure ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna's benevolence and potential patronage, as argued above.[1233]

In concluding our reflections on history in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, we may ask why this learned discipline figured in the sultan's salons. Here, passages from *Ādāb al-mulūk* and *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, two of the mirrors-for-princes produced for al-Ghawrī's library, deserve special attention.

> Among the distinguishing marks (*ṣifāt*) that rulers need to possess are [...] the memorization of the thought of the earlier rulers and the inquiry into the things which they relied upon and [the actions] they performed.[1234]

> A ruler should, when leading a good life, read the books of the ancients, seek to listen to their stories, and follow their manners [...]. It is most appropriate for the rulers of our time to do this.[1235]

> Among the things that rulers should consider part of their appointment is that [...] they should read many books and memorize the biographies of rulers.[1236]

1233   Cf. section 3.1.2.3 above.
1234   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 5ᵛ–6ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 6.
1235   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fol. 11ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.
1236   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 68–71.

According to these texts, the idea that a good ruler should study the history of ancient rulers so that he would be able to follow their course of action circulated at al-Ghawrī's court. By studying accounts of the behavior of past rulers in works such as Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* or Ibn al-Shiḥna's *Rawḍat al-manāẓir*, al-Ghawrī and the attendees of his *majālis* were doing just this. Thus, he not only benefited from the lessons in statecraft that these works offered,[1237] but also demonstrated to the members of his court that he lived up to the expectations presented in political advice literature of his time. That is, by reading historical works, al-Ghawrī performatively displayed his virtues as a ruler. It is surely not a coincidence that Ibn Iyās mentions, among al-Ghawrī's positive traits, that as sultan, he "was very fond of the recitation of works of history (*tawārīkh*) and biographies (*siyar*)."[1238] Moreover, the historical works that were read in the sultan's salons also legitimated the existing order of things and endowed it with meaning by demonstrating the continuity of political rule in Islamicate history in general and the importance of the interaction between scholars and leaders in particular.[1239] At the same time, al-Ghawrī and those around him also apparently sought aesthetic pleasure from the works they read, given that much of the historical material current in the *majālis* took the form of anecdotes that were of literary value at least as much as they were historically informative.[1240] Thus, the engagement with history in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* is a prime example of the interrelatedness of learning, entertainment, legitimation, and representation that defined these events.

4.2.8 *Philosophy and Mirrors-for-Princes Material*

The field of knowledge referred to in our sources as *ḥikma* is quantitatively by far the least prominent: Only 1 percent of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* belong to this discipline. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the share of *ḥikma* material in the preserved text is likewise just 1 percent. However, if the third part of the work which, according to the intro-

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1237 On the didactic function of historiography in Islamicate court contexts, see also, e.g., Trausch, *Formen* 20; Conermann, *Historiographie* 198, 425; Osti, Culture 200–1; von Hees, Guidance 373–4; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 21; Meisami, Rulers 73, 85.

1238 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

1239 On the legitimating function of historiography in Islamicate court contexts, see also, e.g., Trausch, *Formen* 20, 490–1; Conermann, *Historiographie* 425; Robinson, *Historiography* 119–21, 189; and in early Islam, see Donner, *Narratives* 112–22. On the importance of historiography for the creation of meaning, see White, *Content*, passim.

1240 On the entertaining function of Mamluk historiography, see also, e.g., Haarmann, *Quellenstudien* 134, 167.

duction, dealt with "the wisdom of wise men" (*ḥikmat al-ḥukamā* [*sic*]),[1241] had reached us, quite a different picture would probably emerge.

In our sources, *ḥikma* (lit. wisdom) is used in a variety of ways. As a non-technical term, it can refer to witty remarks, aperçus, or clever insights,[1242] as is also exemplified by the collection of aphorisms attributed to ʿAlī under the title *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa* and the ethical contents of Ḥaṭiboğlu's *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı*, both of which were produced for al-Ghawrī. In a narrower sense, *ḥikma* and its derivations denote a field of learning best called "philosophy" in English,[1243] with the focus on the kind of practical philosophy typical of mirrors-for-princes.

Falsafa, a term often understood to be the Arabic equivalent of "philosophy," is used very rarely in our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. When it appears, it typically refers to a historical context and to a particular type of Islamicate philosophy based on a mostly Peripatetic and Neoplatonic heritage. Its representatives include Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), called *ṣāḥib al-falsafa*,[1244] and Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 311/923), who is credited with books about *falsafa*.[1245] As a concept associated with people from bygone times, *falsafa* did not evoke criticism from the authors of our texts or the *majālis* participants. In the one instance where *falsafa* is used in the *majālis* accounts to denote not a field of knowledge pursued by an earlier scholar, but a tradition of thought that might make meaningful contributions to current debates, the situation is notably different. In the discussion of whether the Prophet Muḥammad could have lived longer than he did, the refutation of the position associated with al-Ghazālī begins with the censure that it "belongs to the principles (*qawāʿid*) of *falsafa*."[1246] A preceding chapter examined the background of this accusation.[1247] Here, it is noteworthy for its implied judgment that positions associated with *falsafa* should be rejected in current debates. Similarly, one of the most prominent *majālis* participants, the Ottoman prince Qurqud, strongly opposed the tradition of *falsafa* as well as those forms of *kalām* heavily influenced by it.[1248] He stated the following, based on earlier authorities:

1241   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ʳ.

1242   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 41ʳ; ii, fol. 16ʳ.

1243   E.g., Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 159; (ed. ʿAzzām) 48; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 4, 73, 191; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3, 77.

1244   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 21ᵛ.

1245   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 17ᵛ.

1246   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 259.

1247   See section 4.2.3 above.

1248   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 48ʳ–49ʳ, 199ʳ–199ᵛ. See also Al-Tikriti, Voice 84–6, 90.

Whoever claims that he occupies himself with *falsafa* for the benefit he believes to derive from it, Satan has indeed taken him into his service and deceived him. It is incumbent upon the sultan whom God has honored and through whom He honors Islam and its people to defend the Muslims against the evil of these sinister people, expel them from the *madrasa*s, banish them, punish their occupation with this discipline, and deliver those who openly believe in the doctrines of the *falāsifa* to the sword.[1249]

Thus, there is a clear-cut dichotomy regarding the terms for "philosophy" in our sources:[1250] While *ḥikma* denotes philosophical material without implying any negative evaluation, *falsafa* refers to a specific intellectual strand, mainly associated with the past, that is strongly rejected in the context of the *majālis*, when it appears as a living tradition.[1251]

Nevertheless, according to our sources, material from the *falsafa* tradition was discussed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, albeit rather infrequently.[1252] *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* recounts a pertinent discussion as follows:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "What is the meaning (*maʿnā*) of 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*)?"
>
> **Answer:** In *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, [the author] said: "Knowledge is the attainment of the form (*ṣūra*) of a thing in the mind. One can also say: [It is] the form (*ṣūra*) that occurs to the mind."
>
> In *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, [the author] said: "[It is] definite and firm belief (*iʿtiqād*) that agrees with reality."
>
> In *Sharḥ al-ʿAḍud*, [the author] said: "[It is] an attribute (*ṣifa*) requiring discernment (*tamyīz*) that rules out the possibility [of its] opposite (*lā yaḥtamilu l-naqīḍ*)."

1249　Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 48ᵛ–49ʳ.

1250　On the applicability of the term "philosophy" to the premodern Islamicate world, see Eichner, Philosophie 191–2.

1251　These findings support the argument in Griffel, Kommentar, in Ibn Rushd, *Abhandlung* 63–9. On *falsafa* as a specific type of philosophy, see also Griffel, Killing 220; Griffel, Theology Engages 435; Sabra, Science 3; Fancy, *Science* 20. For *ḥikma* and its derivations as "philosophy," see also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* xiii, 298–306; Sabra, Appropriation 240; Sabra, Science 2; Huart, Ḥikma 324; Gutas, Wisdom 66; Gutas, Manuscripts 908; Gutas, Heritage 94–5; Crone, *Thought* 168; Marlow, Kings 102; Sievert, Eavesdropping 167; Eichner, Philosophie 191, 205; Ahmed, *Islam* 15–8; Endreß, Reading 379, 398, 409; Rudolph, Concept 36; El-Rouayheb, *History* 57, 19–22, 111–2, 145, 147.

1252　On the social context of philosophy in Ayyubid and Mamluk times, see Brentjes, Sciences 152–64.

In *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, [the author] said: "[It is] an attribute through which what has been mentioned (*madhkūr*) becomes clear to the one in whom it is found. One can also say: [It is] grasping [both] the compound (*murakkab*) and the simple (*mufrad*)."

In *Sharḥ al-Maṭāliʿ*, [the author] said: "Knowledge (*ʿulūm*) is an expression (*ʿibāra*) of the problemata (*masāʾil*). One can also say: [It is] an expression of the affiliated subjects (*maḥmulāt muntasiba*) when a form occurs in the mind. [This form] must either be devoid of an assessment (*ḥukm*) or not. [In] the first [case], it is a concept (*taṣawwur*) and [in] the second [case], it is a proposition (*taṣdīq*). If [it has two sides and] both of its sides are [of] equal [weight], it is [called] doubt (*shakk*), and [doubt] belongs to the rubric of concepts. If one of its sides outweighs the other, the preponderant [side] is called opinion (*ẓann*) and the outweighed [side] is called false conjecture (*wahm*). If the other [side] is not conceivable at all, it is [called] certainty (*yaqīn*). [The latter] can be subdivided into six parts: first principles (*awwaliyyāt*), directly observed things (*mushāhadāt*), things acquired by experience (*mujabbarāt*), intuitively acquired things (*hadsiyyāt*), things established by trustworthy transmission (*mutawātirāt*), and things established by rational reasoning (*naẓariyyāt*)."[1253]

The starting point of this conversation is al-Ghawrī's question about the meaning of *ʿilm*. An unnamed interlocutor replies by enumerating several definitions of knowledge that are attributed to five scholarly works. In categorizing these replies, it is helpful to rely on the typology of Islamicate definitions of knowledge developed in Franz Rosenthal's seminal *Knowledge Triumphant*.[1254] The first reply is an example of Rosenthal's type E of definitions of knowledge: To know means to attain the form of what is known in one's mind.[1255] The unnamed interlocutor thereafter gives a slightly different answer, according to which knowledge is not the attainment (*ḥuṣūl*) of the form in question, but rather the form itself.[1256]

The next definition falls under Rosenthal's type F that encompasses various versions of the basic formula "Knowledge is belief."[1257] The definition listed in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* adds only minor qualifications to this basic statement by

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1253   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ms) 260–1.
1254   On the principles of Rosenthal's typology, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 51.
1255   On this definition, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 61 (type E9).
1256   On this definition, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 61 (type E8).
1257   Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 63.

explaining that knowledge is definite (*jāzim*) and firm (*thābit*) belief corresponding to what is really there (*al-wāqiʿ*).[1258]

The third definition falls under Rosenthal's type D, which sees knowledge as "a process of clarification, assertion, and decision."[1259] Under this type, it counts among those definitions that view knowledge as based on discernment or distinction which determines that what is opposed to it is impossible.[1260] The fourth definition, again given in two different forms, likewise belongs to Rosenthal's type D, but highlights the aspect of clarification (*tajliya*).[1261]

The fifth and last definition is by far the longest. Like the first definition discussed, it states that knowledge comes to be when a form is attained in the mind and thus falls under Rosenthal's type E. Unlike the first definition, however, it further delineates the quality of the form in the mind: It can either be devoid of an assessment (*ḥukm*) and thus constitute a concept (*taṣawwur*), that is, knowledge about a thing in itself, such as the notion "A" that makes no statement about B, C, or anything else apart from A. Or, it includes an assessment and is therefore a proposition (*taṣdīq*) that says something about the relationship between two or more things, such as, for example, "A is not B."[1262] This basic differentiation between *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq* is fundamental for discussions about knowledge in Islamicate thought during the middle period.[1263]

Having introduced this basic distinction, the fifth definition in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* discusses the different levels of certainty knowledge can have. If knowledge consists of two options, neither of which supersedes the other, we are dealing with doubt (*shakk*). If one of the two options predominates, we speak of the predominant one as opinion (*ẓann*) and the other one as false conjecture (*wahm*). If the preponderant option entirely rules out the second option, we reach the level of certainty. Certainty can be subdivided into seven different types, depending on its source.[1264]

All of these definitions of knowledge mentioned in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* feature in many other Islamicate texts as well and have already received considerable scholarly attention with regard to their philosophical background and significance. Rather than repeating these earlier findings, we focus here on three

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1258 On this definition, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 64 (type F8).

1259 Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 58.

1260 On this definition, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 59 (type D9).

1261 On this definition, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 59 (type D10).

1262 Cf. van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 95–6.

1263 Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 95. See van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 95–113, on this differentiation by various Muslim authors, partly refuting Wolfson, Terms. See also Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 207.

1264 See van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 398–400, on different types of certainty.

questions that are important to our understanding of the role of philosophy in the scholarly life of al-Ghawrī's court: (1) What are the sources used in the quote above from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and how are they quoted? (2) Why does *al-Kawkab al-durrī* include this conversation about the definition of knowledge? (3) What does this passage tell us about the significance of the Greek philosophical heritage for the intellectual culture of al-Ghawrī's court?

The five sources to which *al-Kawkab al-durrī* attributes the quoted definitions of knowledge are not readily identifiable in all cases, as the unnamed author gives only short titles. In the case of *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, we are clearly dealing with a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's (d. 428/1037) famous *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (Pointers and reminders).[1265] As a textual analysis shows, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) commentary of the work indeed includes the first version of the definition.[1266]

The second title given, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, can be identified with the celebrated *kalām* textbook of this title by Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar b. ʿAbdallāh al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390)[1267] already mentioned above as quoted in the *majālis* accounts.[1268] An analysis of al-Taftāzānī's writings, however, shows that the definition quoted is not included in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, but rather in the same author's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.[1269]

The third title, *Sharḥ al-ʿAḍud*, most probably refers to ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's commentary commonly known as *Sharḥ al-ʿAḍudī* on ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar Ibn al-Ḥājib's (d. 646/1249) epitome of his own *Muntahā l-wuṣūl ilā ʿilmay al-jadal wa-l-uṣūl* (Reaching the utmost in the sciences of debate and the foundations), which deals with the fundamentals of jurisprudence.[1270] However, the definition of knowledge ascribed to *Sharḥ al-ʿAḍud* could not be located in this work. Rather, the definition given in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* again appears in al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.[1271]

1265   On commentaries on *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, see Wisnovsky, Nature 173–4; Wisnovsky, Avicennism; Endreß, Reading 410–5; and on the importance of Ibn Sīnā's writings for philosophy under the Mamluks, see Brentjes, Sciences 154–5, 186; Brentjes, *Teaching* 100–1, 164, 255.

1266   Al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ṭūsī and al-Rāzī, *Sharḥay al-Ishārāt* 134. On this work in the contemporaneous Ottoman court, see Gutas, Manuscripts 922–3.

1267   On his life and works, see Würtz, *Theologie* 17–36.

1268   Cf. section 4.2.3 above. See also section 5.1.4.2 below.

1269   Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 19.

1270   Cf. van Ess, *Träume* 64–5. The work referred to might also be al-Jurjānī's commentary on ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's *Risāla fī Ādāb al-baḥth* (Epistle on the manners of inquiry). This work was not accessible to me.

1271   Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 15.

Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, mentioned as the source of the fourth definition of knowledge, has already been referred to above as al-Jurjānī's commentary on al-Ījī's *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Again, however, the definition attributed to this work could not be found in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, but appears in al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.[1272] Finally, the text referred to as *Sharḥ al-Maṭāliʿ* can probably be identified with Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Taḥtānī's (d. 776/1374) commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1283) textbook on logic *Maṭāliʿ al-anwār*.[1273] However, the quotation *al-Kawkab al-durrī* ascribes to *Sharḥ al-Maṭāliʿ* cannot be not found in al-Taḥtānī's commentary, or in al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.

Taken together, in only one case could a definition be located in the work it is ascribed to. In three other instances, the definitions seem to be quotations from al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* and not from the works identified in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* as their respective source. In one case, no source for the quoted definition could be identified. These findings are rather peculiar, since explicit indications of sources in the *majālis* works in general and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in particular are usually reliable.

There are two possibilities to explain why the person responsible for the references in question—who could be the sultan's unnamed interlocutor in the *majlis* or the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*—provided erroneous information about the origin of the definitions: He could have done so accidentally, by unknowingly misattributing the definitions to the wrong sources. However, the definitions are not simply misattributed, as would be the case if a quotation from work A is credited to work B or vice-versa. Rather, the majority of the definitions seem to come from a widely available work that is not even named as a source. This suggests that the definitions were misattributed intentionally.

It seems plausible to believe that these misattributions were an attempt on the part of the person responsible for them to demonstrate to the other *majālis* participants his erudition and the breadth of his reading. This implies that familiarity with the works in question was seen as something desirable among the members of al-Ghawrī's court. If this assumption is correct, it suggests that the ability to quote philosophical works, such as a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's writings or a textbook on logic, was highly valued at al-Ghawrī's court, as was cognizance of the *falsafa*-based epistemological theories of theological works.

Furthermore, the fact that the question "What is the meaning of 'knowledge'?" is answered in a work on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* not with recourse to

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1272 Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 15.

1273 Cf. van Ess, *Träume* 68.

prophetic traditions, Sufi teachings, or other religious concepts,[1274] but rather through *falsafa*-based epistemological concepts indicates the value that the sultan and his court society attributed to philosophical traditions of thought that were not, in their origins, religious. Yet, to return to our second question, how can we explain why *al-Kawkab al-durrī* includes this conversation about the definition of knowledge at all?

As Rosenthal showed, the issue of how to define knowledge was of great interest to Islamicate scholars of numerous disciplines, including philology, philosophy, and rational theology, all of which "passionately" sought "a satisfying brief definition of *ʿilm*."[1275] Hence, collections of definitions of knowledge were a rather common phenomenon in premodern scholarly Islamicate works in various fields of knowledge.[1276] By depicting Sultan al-Ghawrī requesting a definition of *ʿilm* and including a list of possible definitions, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* presents the sultan's court as participating in one of the major intellectual projects of premodern Islamicate epistemology. If we assume that a conversation about this topic took place in the sultan's salons along the lines recounted in our source, we may further conclude that the Mamluk ruler and his court society were interested in this time-honored question of Islamicate philosophical thought and sought to demonstrate their familiarity with numerous possible answers to it.

Rosenthal further pointed out that "Greek logic became the foundation of all Muslim epistemology."[1277] This helps answer our third question about the significance of the Greek philosophical heritage for the intellectual culture of al-Ghawrī's court. Many of the definitions of knowledge enumerated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* come directly from *falsafa* works building on the Greek philosophical heritage, as the quotation from a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* shows, or stem from works in neighboring disciplines that were influenced by philosophical epistemology such as *kalām*. Yet, as seen, our sources also indicate that in the intellectual milieu at al-Ghawrī's court, the mere accusation that a position was based on *falsafa* teachings was enough to discredit it.

A concept introduced by Abdelhamid Sabra can help us solve this apparent paradox. In his article "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement" (1987), Sabra argued that Muslim scholars did not just adopt ideas from earlier Greek authors, rather they appropriated them such that they became part of Muslim

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1274   On religious concepts of knowledge, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 70–193.
1275   Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 46.
1276   Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 46. See also Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 47–8, 207.
1277   Rosenthal, *Knowledge* 195.

thinking.[1278] In a second step, this appropriated Greek knowledge was then, to use Sabra's term, naturalized, that is, it became part of the Muslim intellectual tradition to such a degree that its Greek origin was all but forgotten.[1279] One of the decisive steps in this process of naturalization was the stage "in which *falsafa*, the type of thought and discourse found in the writings of philosophers like Fārābī and Avicenna, began to be practised in the context of *kalām*."[1280] Building on Sabra's work, Frank Griffel writes: "Philosophy became such a genuine Islamic enterprise, one might say, that it shed its foreign, Greek name, *falsafa*, and was practiced as a properly Islamic science in the field of *kalām*, that is rationalist theology."[1281]

The list of the definitions of knowledge in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* is a clear-cut example of what Sabra called naturalization: Based on Greek-inspired *falsafa*, these definitions were nevertheless not considered problematic or foreign by the person responsible for their inclusion in our source. Rather, they were so deeply integrated into works of various fields of learning, including rational theology, that they did not appear to be problematic to members of al-Ghawrī's court society. Thus, we see that at least some of the insights of the intellectual tradition of *falsafa* based on the Greek philosophical heritage lived on and found an audience in the learned court life of the late Mamluk period. By studying this kind of material, al-Ghawrī and those around him demonstrated that they were abreast of the scholarly communication of their time, even in such a sophisticated and highbrow field as philosophical epistemology.

Among all the fields of learning discussed in the works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, thanks to Irwin's 2008 article discussed above, practical philosophy has thus far received by far the greatest share of attention.[1282] Irwin's article is correct in noting that much of the pertinent material is closely related to or originated in the mirrors-for-princes literature.[1283] However, Irwin's article does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that our sources are not simple

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1278   Sabra, Appropriation 227–8. See also Sabra, Appropriation 236.

1279   Sabra, Appropriation 236. See also Sabra, Appropriation 237–8, 240–1.

1280   Sabra, Appropriation 236–7.

1281   Griffel, Killing 217. On the relationship between *kalām* and philosophy, see also, e.g., Frank, Science 14–6, 18–21, 36; Frank, *Kalām* and Philosophy; Sabra, Science 11–24; Eichner, Handbooks 297–8; Eichner, *Tradition, passim*; Eichner, Philosophie 202–3, 205; Eichner, Dissolving; Griffel, Theology Engages, esp. 435–6, 446, 453; Wisnovsky, Aspect; Wisnovsky, Avicenna 92–3, 104–15, 128–33; Fancy, *Science* 20, 37–8; Schmidtke, Theologie 186–8; Endreß, Reading 397–400; Würtz, *Theologie*, esp. 5–9, 278–9; Shihadeh, Developments 144–8; Thiele, Scholarship 224, 242.

1282   See section 2.2.2 above.

1283   Irwin, Thinking 42.

"record[s] of the sultan's *majlis*es,"[1284] as his publication states, but rather literary texts produced with distinctive intentions and following a specific set of literary and narrative strategies, as shown above. This applies in particular to the source Irwin's article uses the most, *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. As discussed, its author, al-Sharīf, added sections introduced with the terms *al-munāsib* and *al-khātima* to his accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* to demonstrate his erudition.[1285] Irwin's article, however, relies to a considerable degree on precisely these sections by al-Sharīf to study the "material produced by and for the sultan at his soirees."[1286] Hence, significant parts of Irwin's study of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* are based on material that none of our sources claims was actually from these sessions. Thus, while stemming from the intellectual context al-Ghawrī's court, *al-munāsib* and *al-khātima* sections of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are particularly ill-suited to shed light on discussions of practical philosophy and mirrors-for-princes material in the sultan's salons.

The misunderstanding of the character of these sections in Irwin's article has serious implications for the assessment of the political thinking of al-Ghawrī and his court society. According to Irwin's work, much of the pertinent material was of Persian background[1287] and demonstrates that "Qānṣūh's court culture was a Persianate one."[1288] While this last statement is surely not mistaken and indeed substantiated by many of our findings, the field of practical philosophy and political thinking is especially ill-suited to corroborate it. Many *al-munāsib* and *al-khātima* sections of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* definitely include Persianate material. However, this material comes not from the sultan's *majālis*, but is rather part of al-Sharīf's own literary output. As seen above, al-Sharīf had a Persian-speaking background and identified strongly with his Persianate cultural heritage.[1289] While this material shows that representatives of Persianate cultural traditions were part of al-Ghawrī's court society, it does not support the assumption that the entire tradition of political thinking at al-Ghawrī's court was Persianate in character.

Furthermore, there is no conclusive evidence for the suggestion in Irwin's work that at al-Ghawrī's court, "secular" philosophical concepts of rulership took "precedence over the shar'iah."[1290] At least four observations speak strongly against this assumption. First, according to our sources, al-Ghawrī and those

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1284   Irwin, Thinking 38.
1285   Cf. sections 3.1.1.2 and 3.1.1.3 above.
1286   Irwin, Thinking 42.
1287   Irwin, Thinking 42.
1288   Irwin, Thinking 40.
1289   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
1290   Irwin, Thinking 42.

around him took a keen interest in the tradition of Islamic legal thought. This applied to various fields of law in general, as shown above,[1291] and to the legal foundations of political rule in particular, as is shown clearly below.[1292] Second, the Persianate, "secular" notions of rulership that are such a defining feature of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as a literary text are far less prominent, and indeed partly absent, from the other *majālis* accounts;[1293] thus, this feature is best explained by reference to al-Sharīf's individual intellectual background. Third, our above survey of mirrors-for-princes produced for al-Ghawrī showed that even in the case of this literary genre, Persianate, let alone "secular" elements are of very limited significance.[1294] Fourth, whether the Persianate material that Irwin's article studied should be seen as standing in conflict with Islamic notions of political thought is open to debate. As Deborah G. Tor argued, premodern sources on Islamicate political thought, especially mirrors-for-princes, bear witness to an "amalgamation of the Iranian and Islamic political paradigms"[1295] that results in an "Islamisation in the process of [the] assimilation"[1296] of the Iranian ideas.[1297] This "Islamisation" manifested itself in various ways, including the stylization of Persian kings as Muslims *avant la lettre* and the integration of pre-Islamic Persian figures into Islamic visions of history and genealogy.[1298] Hence, the material Irwin's article identified as Persianate in origin and "secular" in outlook does not necessarily stand in conflict with Islamic traditions of political thought.[1299]

Contrary to the assumptions in Irwin's article, the only mirror-for-princes we can say, with a high level of certainty, was read or discussed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* was from a distinctly non-Persian background: al-Ṭurṭūshī's *Sirāj al-mulūk* (The lamp of rulers), of which al-Ghawrī had owned a copy even before he became sultan.[1300] *Sirāj al-mulūk* ranked among the most influential Islamicate mirrors-for-princes of all times.[1301] Its author Muḥammad b. al-Walīd

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1291   Cf. section 4.2.1 above.
1292   See esp. section 6.3.3 below.
1293   Cf. sections 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.3.2 above.
1294   Cf. section 3.2.4 above.
1295   Tor, Islamisation 116.
1296   Tor, Islamisation 116.
1297   See also Tor, Islamisation 121.
1298   Tor, Islamisation 116. See also Tor, Islamisation 118–21.
1299   See also section 6.2.1 below.
1300   Cf. chapter 3.2.4 above.
1301   Nagel, *Staat* ii, 93. For its wide circulation in Mamluk times, see, e.g., Herzog, Composition 110; Haarmann, Library 332; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 231; and in contemporaneous Ottoman courtly contexts, see Kafadar and Karamustafa, Books 500; Yılmaz, Books 510, 515, 525.

al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126 or 525/1131), an accomplished traditionist and Mālikī jurist,[1302] most probably wrote this text in Egypt in reaction to the demise of the Muslim-ruled polities of his home region of al-Andalus.[1303] As Ben Abdesselem noted, in his work al-Ṭurṭūshī used numerous instructive narratives "to represent the governmental ideal of an Islamic state" and to illustrate his "theoretical views concerning the general rules of the public law of Islam."[1304]

In the sections that *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* cites from al-Ṭurṭūshī's work, we find a story about the early Sufi Ibrāhīm b. Adham al-Balkhī (d. ca. 165/782)[1305] as well as a narrative about the famous Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/ 1092), which reads:

> Every year Niẓām al-Mulk took from the sultan's treasury stipends for the righteous (*sulaḥāʾ*), the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), the pious (*ʿubbād*), and the ascetics (*zuhhād*) [amounting to] 600,000 *dīnār*s. They lived on this money and prayed for the sultan. Then, a slanderer came to the ruler and said: "Every year your vizier wastes from your treasury 600,000 *dīnār*s on the poor and the good-for-nothings (*jaʿīdiyya*)." Then, the sultan summoned [Niẓām al-Mulk] and said: "Oh my father, it has reached me that every year you take from our treasury 600,000 *dīnār*s and distribute it among those who are of no use to us. If you had spent this money on our army, we would have taken the walls of Constantinople." Thereupon, Niẓām al-Mulk wept and replied: "Oh my son, I am an old Persian man. If I were offered in the marketplace, [my price] would not exceed five *dīnār*s. You are a young Turkic man, if you were offered [in the marketplace], [your price] might reach 30 *dīnār*s. You are occupied with yourself while your wishes follow your desires. The only thing that rises to God is your disobedience [toward Him] without any obedience. Your troops, whom you have readied for [all] calamities, are likewise deeply immersed in disobedience [toward God]. I have mustered for you an army that is called 'the army of the night.' When your troops sleep, they stand in battle rows in front of their Lord, moving their tongues in praise, and spreading their arms in prayer. The arrows of their prayers penetrate the shields of heaven [...] and they ask God Most High that your rule may be strong. Verily, through which means would you and I be distinguished by

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1302   Ben Abdesselem, al-Ṭurṭūshī 739–40.
1303   Khalidi, *Thought* 194.
1304   Ben Abdesselem, al-Ṭurṭūshī 740. See also Lambton, Mirrors 424.
1305   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 90ᵛ–91ʳ, quoting al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-mulūk* 69–70.

> [our] high rank without [these] people?" Then, the ruler apologized: "Oh
> my father, enlarge for me this army!"[1306]

In *Sirāj al-mulūk*, this narrative is included in the section "On the sultan's cor-
rect behavior regarding the treasury,"[1307] whereas *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* places
it directly after mentioning Niẓām al-Mulk's death. Although this suggests that
the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* understood the narrative as providing his-
torically relevant information on the Seljuq vizier, its main message is clear:
It instructs rulers to spend parts of their wealth on the patronage of scholars
and religious figures, as the latter render an invaluable service to rulers by ask-
ing for God's protection. This recommendation matches well al-Ghawrī's efforts
to present himself as a ruler who supported the scholarly and religious life of
his realm. By focusing attention precisely on this aspect of al-Ṭurṭūshī's advice,
the members of al-Ghawrī's court emphasized that their ruler fulfilled—or at
least tried to appear to be fulfilling—the expectations of proper leadership.
Moreover, while situated in a Persianate context, the anecdote in question does
not advocate specifically "Persian" or "secular" political wisdom, but rather reli-
gious and Islamic notions of good governance, thus being representative for
much of the political thought voiced in the sultan's *majālis* according to our
sources.

Following Louise Marlow, we can understand the study of mirrors-for-
princes literature as a legitimating practice in itself, one that, in the theoretical
framework of the present study, constitutes a conscious act of courtly com-
munication. Marlow writes: "The intimate mode of address employed in many
works of advice masks their potential public significance. Such literature some-
times, and probably often, served ceremonial and legitimizing functions."[1308]
Marlow thus refers to mirrors-for-princes "as a means for the communication
of ideology."[1309] Accordingly, we can interpret the discussion of mirrors-for-
princes material in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and the production of such works at the
sultanic court as acts of communication that served to represent and legitim-
ate al-Ghawrī's rule. Through these practices, al-Ghawrī and his court signified
their interest in political theory and Islamicate precepts of good governance.
By studying and patronizing political philosophy, the sultan demonstrated to
his court that he cared about what were understood as the foundations of just
rule in his time.[1310]

1306   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 31ᵛ–32ʳ, quoting al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-mulūk* 379–80.
1307   Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-mulūk* 372.
1308   Marlow, Surveying 527. See also Marlow, Performances 79–80.
1309   Marlow, Surveying 531.
1310   On the performative use of mirrors-for-princes material, see also Marlow, Perform-
        ances 63, 65, 79.

The fact that *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* quotes from *Sirāj al-mulūk* precisely the narrative given above reveals how political thought incorporated in earlier writings was communicated and consumed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. It was not the theoretical reflections that works such as al-Ṭurṭūshī's usually placed at the beginning of a given section that attracted attention, rather it was the instructive and, at the same time, enjoyable narratives that these texts used to support their arguments and construct a specific understanding of the world that caught the attention of the sultan and his circle. Just as in other fields of intellectual inquiry, the authors of our *majālis* works and hence most probably also the attendees of al-Ghawrī's salons preferred material that was instructive and entertaining over purely theoretical discussions of practical philosophy.

In conclusion, we see that philosophy in its various forms—be it the highly refined epistemology of Ibn Sīnā's commentators and followers or the more practical political thought of authors such as al-Ṭurṭūshī—was very much alive in the late Mamluk period and according to our sources constituted a significant, although not too frequent topic of conversation in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. By engaging with this kind of material, the sultan and his circle demonstrated their possession of cultural capital and their concern for notions of good governance.

4.2.9   *Other Fields of Knowledge*

In addition to the fields of knowledge discussed thus far, our sources indicate that the participants of the sultan's *majālis* paid attention to topics from numerous other disciplines, too. They often discussed only one or two questions from these fields of knowledge, which included medicine,[1311] zoology,[1312] astronomy,[1313] mathematics,[1314] dream interpretation,[1315] or the subfield of lin-

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1311   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 103–4; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 157–8, 306–7. Al-Ghawrī's library included at least two medical works, namely Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Qayṣūnīzāde's *Kamāl al-farḥa fī dafʿ al-sumūm wa-ḥifẓ al-ṣiḥḥa* preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1952 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 864; Flemming, Activities 254) and Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī's *Rujūʿ al-shaykh ilā ṣabāḥ fī l-quwwa ʿalā l-bāh* preserved in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1940 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 840).

1312   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 145; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 60–1, 105–6.

1313   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 133; (ed. ʿAzzām) 52. Al-Ghawrī's library included with al-Suyūṭī's *al-Hayʾat al-saniyya fī l-hayʾat al-sunniyya* at least one work of cosmological and astronomical content. The copy of the work from the sultan's library is preserved as MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 4205 (see Arberry, *Handlist* v, 65).

1314   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 158; (ed. ʿAzzām) 60; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 214–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72–3.

1315   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 193–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79–80.

guistic studies called *ʿilm al-adab*[1316] in the Mamluk period.[1317] Unlike the dominant disciplines in the *majālis* such as *fiqh* and *tafsīr*, many of these fields of knowledge dealt with subjects that were not of a religious character.

Their discussion and the consequential juxtaposition of religious and non-religious systems of world explanation usually were not commented on in our sources. However, there are two interesting instances in which our sources present the *majālis* participants as addressing apparent contradictions between revelation-based claims and other truth claims.

The first such passage comes from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "How much [time] has passed since the beginning of procreation [of humankind] (*tanāsul*) till the present day, that is, the year 919?"[1318]
>
> **Answer:** "It is said in the Torah that since the beginning of the world, 5740 years have passed.[1319] As for the Christians, they relate that according to the Torah they have, 7010 years have passed since the beginning of procreation up to the present year.[1320] As for the Zoroastrians, it is 5067 years."[1321]
>
> His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Since neither the Book[1322] nor the *sunna* [provide] unequivocal textual evidence or adequate proof, we do not take any of these numbers as a valid norm. Rather, it is possible that since the beginning of procreation till the present day, 100,000 or 200,000 or [even] more years have passed, just as the astronomers claim that since the beginning of the world when the stars began to move [...] up to our time, 4,000,320,008 year have passed."

1316 Cf. on this term Bauer, Adab; Bauer, Anthologien 82–3; Bauer, Literature 126–7; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 467–9.

1317 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 17–8, 143, 172; (ed. ʿAzzām) 17. The fact that key attendees of the *majālis* were not native speakers of Arabic may have precluded a more thorough interest in this field.

1318 Corresponding to 1513–4 CE.

1319 On the Jewish calendar, see Stowasser, *Day* 8, 110–1. In it, the *hijrī* year 919 corresponds to the years 5273–4 after the creation of humankind.

1320 This date is more or less in accordance with Christian teachings, according to which the Earth was created in 5500, 5493, or 5199 BCE, cf. Stowasser, *Day* 10, 111.

1321 This information roughly corresponds to the age of mankind in Zoroastrian belief, cf. Taqizadeh, Era 33–5.

1322 I.e., the Quran.

The *shaykh al-Islām* said: "I have not seen any unambiguous (*ṣarīḥ*) textual evidence from the Book and the *sunna* that would indicate this or a larger or a smaller [number of years] […]."[1323]

The problem debated here occupied learned Muslims for centuries. While the scriptures of other religious communities yielded seemingly rather clear, although conflicting data about the age of the world, the evidence from the Quran and the corpus of prophetic traditions accepted as authentic was much less straightforward. Consequently, numerous assumptions about the age of the world appeared in premodern Arabic historiographical works. These assumptions in the historiographical literature usually did not go beyond small five-digit numbers. Astronomers and astrologers rejected these rather low estimates, as their models of world explanation indicated that billions of years must have passed since the beginning of the movement of the stars.[1324]

These contradictory assumptions about the age of the world are also attested to in the debate from *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. In it, al-Ghawrī casts doubt on all computations based on scripture by pointing out that no Islamic revealed text provides any clear information. Assumptions based on the scriptures of other communities are only as credible as other estimates, including the rather high numbers of the astronomers. ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna thereupon corroborated the sultan's view and confirmed the absence of an authoritative Islamic text that would confirm any of the estimates presented.

At a first glance, this passage suggests that al-Ghawrī and those around him approached this scientific problem in a way that might appear to modern readers as critical and rationalist, in so far as they did not accept revelation-based information on the age of the world. However, this interpretation is problematic given that the estimates that al-Ghawrī and, at least implicitly, also Ibn al-Shiḥna rejected were not based on Islamic religious knowledge, but rather on the teachings of rival religious communities. Surely, if the Quran or the *ḥadīth* corpus had included clear-cut information on the age of the world, al-Ghawrī and those around him would not have discarded it lightly.

The significance of this passage lies elsewhere. It shows that the sultan was interested in a fundamental question about the universe, one that generations of Muslim authors had devoted considerable thought to. Again, al-Ghawrī and those around him are presented as up-to-date with the scholarly world of their

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1323   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 269–70; (ed. ʿAzzām) 84–5.

1324   Khalidi, *Thought* 119–21. For an early source including all the views discussed in al-Ghawrī's *majlis*, see al-Iṣfahānī, *Annalium* 11–2. For European courtly debates about this question, see Fried, *Netzen* 145.

time. However, it is unusual in the context of the *majālis* accounts to find that no one is shown as having a definite answer to the question debated. The participants enumerate multiple possible solutions, all of which claim the same degree of credibility. This open confession of ignorance is remarkable, but should not be misunderstood as an indication of a lack of cultural capital on the side of the sultan and his intimates. Rather, by affirming that there was no authentic Islamic revealed text that indicated the age of the world and that the data provided by rival systems of world explanation were inconclusive, Muslims of the middle period could demonstrate both their learning and their interest in open-ended intellectual inquiry. This was especially true since, as Thomas Bauer showed, Muslims of this period experienced ambiguity as far less problematic than we are accustomed to today and therefore, arguably did not consider the lack of a clear-cut answer a fundamental problem.[1325]

In at least one other instance, members of the sultan's circle brought forth non-religious arguments against a religious interpretation of a natural phenomenon. Thanks to modern science, it is possible to track down exactly what stimulated the debate in question, which *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* narrates as follows:

> **Sixth *Majlis***
> I went up [to the citadel] on Wednesday, the 14th of al-Rabī' I [911].[1326] The *imām* was *shaykh* Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī.[1327] [The attendees] sat down in the Ashrafiyya [Hall] for 30 *daraja*s.[1328] A lunar eclipse took place (*khasafa l-qamar*). During [the *majlis*], questions were [discussed].
>
> **First question:** Our lord the sultan said: "What is the underlying reason (*ḥikma*) for lunar and solar eclipses?"
>
> **Answer:** I said: "These two belong to the signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) as was mentioned in the *sunna*."
>
> **Second answer:** It was said: "The reason for a lunar eclipse is that the Earth goes between it [that is, the moon] and the sun. The moon is thus cast into darkness and has [only] its original color."
>
> **Reply:** I said: "This contradicts the saying of Him Most High 'It is He who made the sun a shining radiance and the moon a light' [Q 10:5]"[1329]

1325   Bauer, *Kultur*.
1326   Corresponding to 15 August 1505.
1327   On this person, see appendix 2.
1328   This equals 2 hours.
1329   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 133; (ed. 'Azzām) 51–2.

This short discussion was followed by reflections on a grammatical question concerning Q 10:5, an account of the Mongols' behavior during eclipses, and two stories about a man who likened the beauty of his daughter to that of the moon.[1330] Thus, the *majlis* of 14th al-Rabīʿ I 911/15 August 1505 dealt more or less entirely with lunar eclipses and related subjects. Al-Sharīf's introductory statement provides a clear explanation for this choice of topic: An eclipse had taken place in Cairo. Ibn Iyās' account of the events of al-Rabīʿ I 911 confirms that in this month "a total (*fāḥish*)[1331] eclipse of the celestial body of the moon"[1332] took place, but does not indicate its precise date. Here, modern science is useful. According to computations by NASA, a total lunar eclipse occured on 14 August 1505 and was perfectly observable from northeast Africa.[1333] Thus, we can be sure that a lunar eclipse indeed appeared in the night sky over Egypt shortly before the *majlis* recounted in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* was convened.

To fully appreciate the debate recounted in this work, we need to understand the significance of solar and lunar eclipses for premodern Islamicate societies. As the first-person narrator in the passage given above indicated, statements understood as coming from the Prophet Muḥammad pointed to the religious meaning of such events. Note the following tradition from al-Nasāʾī's *Sunan*: "The Messenger of God said: 'The sun and the moon belong to the signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) Most High, and they are not eclipsed because someone dies or lives. Rather, through them, God, the Mighty and Sublime, fills humans with fear.' "[1334] Moreover, prophetic traditions stipulated that Muslims had to perform special prayers on the occasion of eclipses.[1335] Often, premodern Muslims understood eclipses as bad omens that could herald a collapse of political order[1336] or the death of a ruler[1337] and hoped to avoid the catastrophes they announced by means of prayers or other pious acts, such as the manumission of slaves.[1338] The Quran's description of a lunar eclipse as a sign of judgment day (cf. Q 75:8) might have contributed to what appears to have been a widespread

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1330   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 133–6.

1331   Here I follow Wiet's translation in Ibn Iyās, *Journal* 78.

1332   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 81.

1333   Espenak and Meeus, *Canon* A423.

1334   Al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Kusūf*, no. 1459.

1335   Cf. al-Shāfiʿī, *Ikhtilāf* 188–93. See also Böwering, Prayer 218, 226; Varisco, Moon 416; Brown, *Canonization* 256–7; Saleh, Timekeeper 18, 21. On these prayers in Mamluk Cairo, see Lev, Relations 19.

1336   Stephenson, *Eclipses* 432–3. For the Mamluk period, see also Brentjes, Sciences 145–7.

1337   Brentjes, Sciences 150; Saleh, Timekeeper 18.

1338   Gottschalk, *Gelübde* 60–1, 94. See also Frenkel, Accounts 204.

fear of eclipses in premodern Islamicate societies.[1339] There is evidence that al-Ghawrī and those around him shared in this understanding of eclipses as religiously significant phenomena. The endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex explicitly stipulated that its *imām*s must lead special prayers on the occasion of eclipses.[1340]

In addition to this religiously-based understanding, according to al-Sharīf's account, an unnamed interlocutor brought up an alternative interpretation. In his view, the cause for lunar eclipses was "that the Earth goes between [the moon] and the sun"—an explanation that agrees with modern science and could have been known to Arabic speakers since the fundamental works of Ptolemaic astronomy had been translated under the 'Abbasids.[1341] Over the centuries, the debate about whether eclipses should be explained on religious or astronomical grounds developed into a kind of locus classicus for disputes between advocates of revelation-based explanations and those whose views were based on other systems. This is reflected in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, in which he argued that one should not contradict the exponents of *falsafa* on this point, as there was nothing problematic in their teachings. According to al-Ghazālī, arguing against the correctness of the astronomical explanation of lunar eclipses was not only useless, but could even be harmful to religion as the scientific explanation rested on sound demonstrations (sg. *burhān*) that did not contradict revelation. Anyone who nevertheless attacked these established astronomical truths played into the hands of the enemies of religion, who could easily expose the weakness of the counterarguments.[1342] Despite al-Ghazālī's intervention, the debate continued, as is not only demonstrated by the passage in *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that came close to a performative enactment of what al-Ghazālī had written, but also by the writings of the astronomer 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qūshjī (d. 879/1447)), to name just one prominent example.[1343]

In the *majālis* debate al-Sharīf narrates, neither the revelation-based nor the astronomical point of view clearly won the day. Rather, the two explanations for the eclipse stood side-by-side, and the sultan did not endorse either one. This situation is intriguing, as it implies at least a potential acceptance of the

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1339 Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 69. See also Shoshan, *Damascus* 10; Saleh, Timekeeper 17.

1340 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 180, 195. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 104; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 185.

1341 Cf. Wiedemann, Kusūf 535–6.

1342 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, trans. Marmura 6–7. See also Griffel, *Taqlīd* of the Philosophers 288–9; Griffel, Theology Engages 438; Marmura, Science 188–9, 191–2; Saleh, Timekeeper 18.

1343 Rebstock, Naturwissenschaften 421.

astronomical interpretation, which could be considered counter to the efforts of al-Ghawrī and his court to present themselves as pious Muslims. Moreover, Mamluk rulers are generally considered not to have given much support to the natural sciences, apart from medicine.[1344] Then why was the astronomical explanation included in the *majālis* account, and why was it not refuted outright?

At least two explanations seem possible: First, the inclusion of the astronomical explanation could be understood as a demonstration of the erudition of the members of al-Ghawrī's court. Accordingly, those around the sultan were presented as knowing not only the prophetic traditions pertaining to lunar eclipses, but also the pertinent astronomical teachings based on Hellenistic science. Such a combination of religious and astronomical expertise by the members of his court could be seen as befitting a ruler who claimed to be the leader of both the Arab and the non-Arab world.

Second, as seen above, the religious understanding of lunar eclipses almost necessarily implied that they constituted bad omens announcing catastrophes, including the downfall of rulers. As the head of the Mamluk realm, Sultan al-Ghawrī, whose reign was still far from stable in 911/1505 when the eclipse occurred, was likely not interested in having his subjects ponder the calamities that the lunar eclipse might have heralded. By giving leeway to the advocates of an astronomical explanation, al-Ghawrī ensured that the cosmic event could be understood alternatively, such that it was not a harbinger of doom. Thus, supporting, or at least not rejecting, the astronomical explanation might have been an act of political prudence.

Taken together, the debates about the age of humankind and the reason for lunar eclipses suggest that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provided social space for holistic and at least at times open-ended intellectual efforts to make sense of the universe. These efforts were based on revelation and the originally non-Arab scientific heritage and sometimes led to questions and critiques of revelation-based arguments about the structure and makeup of the world, be these for political or scholarly reasons.

4.3   Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as Salons

As argued in a preceding chapter, we are justified in translating the Arabic term *majālis* as "salons," provided the events in question meet specific condi-

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1344   Brentjes, Prison 147–8.

tions.[1345] Summarizing our earlier results, we can enumerate these criteria as follows: the term *majālis* can be rendered as "salons" in English when it pertains to occasions that

(1)   served representational purposes for high-ranking figures;
(2)   played an important social role for the cultural and intellectual elite;
(3)   offered room for edifying and entertaining discussions;
(4)   gave people who did not belong to the uppermost echelons of society an opportunity to interact with members of the latter in conversation; and
(5)   were characterized by a certain tension between differences in social status and equality in debate.

We may pause here and ask whether we are right to translate the term *majālis* as salons in the context of al-Ghawrī's court, that is, whether al-Ghawrī's *majālis* exhibited the listed characteristics.

As for the first condition, it has become clear that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* definitely served to represent al-Ghawrī as a well-lettered, clever, and wise ruler who not only enjoyed music, literature, and the discussions of the *ʿulamāʾ*, but also made meaningful contributions to their debates.

Moreover, it is also beyond doubt that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* matched condition (2), given that famous musicians, such as Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qijiq, and high-ranking scholars of the caliber of ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna and Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf participated in them to foster and maintain their patronage relations with al-Ghawrī. Thus, al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were considerably significant for the cultural and intellectual elite of his time.

Third, the *majālis* also offered space for debates that were edifying and entertaining at the same time. As seen, technical reflections on *kalām* and *fiqh* topics stood next to more light-hearted anecdotes, riddles, and stories about the deeds of prophets before Muḥammad.

However, not all the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were members of the cultural, scholarly, political, administrative, or military elite. Some are almost invisible in other sources from al-Ghawrī's period and can best be described as petty and low-ranking religious functionaries, such as those serving as *imām*s during these gatherings. Others, such as Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār, most probably came to Cairo as a result of the political upheavals in other parts of the Islamicate world and had to make a name for themselves in their new Egyptian social environment. For such men, partaking in the *majālis* offered a unique opportunity to be in contact with the ruler and his innermost circle—an opportunity that could translate into very lucrative positions and other forms of patronage,

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1345   Cf. section 1.2.5 above.

as illustrated by the case of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Naqīb al-Samadīsī, who because of the sultan's patronage rose from prayer leader in the *majālis* to the chief judge of his school of law. Hence, al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provided members of lower social strata opportunities to be in contact with the ruler and reap the benefits such asymmetrical interactions might entail, as the fourth condition suggests.

Finally, al-Ghawrī's *majālis* also met the fifth condition: evidently, they were characterized by a certain degree of tension between differences in social status and equality in debate. As seen above, our sources indicate that members of the *majālis* could, within certain limits, question or even correct the sultan's positions in debate, as the episode in which the sultan misunderstood the legal meaning of the term *shubha* illustrated, to name just one example. At the same time, the sultan's treatment of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan indicates that if, in talking back to the sultan, a *majālis* participant overstepped certain boundaries, the latter would not hesitate to use his supreme position to call the insubordinate participant to account.

To sum up, it is thus fully justified to translate the Arabic term *majālis* as "salons," to the extent that it pertains to the events that al-Ghawrī hosted at the Cairo Citadel. However, should the term "salons" be further qualified as "literary" in the context of al-Ghawrī's court, as suggested by Irwin's work?[1346] In light of the limited significance of literary topics in the *majālis*, the application of this term hardly seems justified, as, according to our sources, literary material in the narrower sense of the word accounted for less than one-fifth of what was presented and discussed; questions from fields such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *kalām* figured more prominently. Hence, calling al-Ghawrī's *majālis* "literary salons" would be an inaccurate characterization. Indeed, when compared with other events from the premodern Islamicate world that are referred to in the secondary literature as "salons," the relatively non-literary character of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* appears to be a distinctive feature of these events.[1347] Moreover, when speaking about the *majālis* our sources do not use any qualifying terms that could be translated as "literary": *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* refers to the events as "*majālis al-sulṭānī* [*sic*]" (sultanic salons),[1348] while *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* speaks about "*majlis sulṭān al-ḥaramayn al-sharifyan*" (the salon of the sultan of the noble sanctuaries).[1349] To the authors of our sources, apparently what

1346   Irwin, Literature 27.
1347   Cf. Ali, *Salons*.
1348   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ᴍꜱ) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3.
1349   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 3ᵛ.

mattered most was not the literary character of the events, or the lack thereof, but the fact that they participated in the sultan's salon.

4.4 Other Educational and Scholarly Activities at al-Ghawrī's Court

Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were not convened in isolation, but were embedded in other educational and scholarly activities at his court (the topic of the present section), and in the broader communicative context of knowledge production and transmission in the late Mamluk period in general (the topic of the following section).

Unlike al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, for which we do not know of comparable and similar richly documented antecedents in Mamluk court life, other intellectual activities pursued by members of al-Ghawrī's court society had parallels in earlier periods of Mamluk history.[1350] These activities included the recitation of al-Bukhārī's entire *Ṣaḥīḥ*—including its *isnād*s—in the courtly space of the Cairo Citadel, which seems to have been of special significance from the eighth/fourteenth century onward.[1351] As Ibn Iyās informs us, this ceremony took place under al-Ghawrī in the same way it had under previous Mamluk rulers, although the chronicler added that, in his estimation, the gifts the sultan dispersed among the scholars at the concluding session (*khatm*) of the recitation were cheaper than was customary.[1352] This final festive session of the ceremony of the yearly reading was conducted on one of the last days of Ramaḍān in a large round tent that had been erected in the courtyard of the southern enclosure of the citadel,[1353] while the other sessions were held in the main mosque of the fortified complex.[1354] Although it is unclear whether al-

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1350   The references in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 342; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 174, to children reading or reciting texts in the sultan's presence are too isolated to be properly contextualized.

1351   Dating according to Hirschler, *Word* 27. See also Blecher, *Said* 7, 58, 81–2, 130.

1352   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 104. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 88, 256, 339–40, 401–2, 478; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 148, 170; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 283ʳ–284ᵛ; Petry, *Robing* 369; Petry, *Protectors* 161. On festive recitations of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in general, see, e.g., Davidson, *Carrying* 87–8; Brown, *Canonization* 339, 342–4.

1353   According to Behrens-Abouseif, *Citadel* 57, the final session was moved to the *ḥawsh* area of the southern enclosure of the citadel during the Circassian period. However, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 402, indicates that the closing ceremony was, at least sometimes, held in al-Maqʿad, i.e., most probably the building erected by Sultan Qāytbāy overlooking the *ḥawsh*.

1354   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 88, 256. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 148, 170; Schimmel, *Sufismus* 275.

Ghawrī took part in the regular sessions as well, he definitely participated in the *khatm* ceremony, together with the four chief judges and other high-ranking scholars.[1355]

Since our sources do not say much about this ceremony during al-Ghawrī's time, we must rely on reports from earlier periods to gain a fuller picture of what might have happened during the event under al-Ghawrī. In general, on this occasion Mamluk rulers were expected to demonstrate their largesse by granting expensive robes of honor to the scholars present, the value of which demonstrated a given scholar's rank. Other members of the sultan's court society participated in these courtly events as well, including students (*ṭalaba*), *amīr*s, captains of the guard, and members of the *khāṣṣakiyya*.[1356] Thus, Mamluk rulers could use this opportunity to demonstrate their generosity to the civilian and military members of their court alike.

Yet, the communicative significance of these events did not end there. As a religious tradition observed throughout the Islamicate world, the recitation of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the spatial heart of the Mamluk Sultanate and in the presence of large segments of the sultan's court society was also a unique opportunity for Mamluk rulers to demonstrate their piety in a form generally understood by their contemporaries. For many premodern Muslims, the transmission of prophetic traditions through lines of clearly identified authorities was a unique way to establish a connection with Muḥammad. As Garrett Davidson noted: "The chain of transmission [of a *ḥadīth*] was the tie that bound the community to the Prophet and through him to God Himself."[1357] "Centuries after the Prophet's death, the chain of transmission gave the hadith collector the opportunity to come into contact with his mystical charisma. It functioned as a kind of sacred relic."[1358]

Following this line of interpretation, premodern Muslims often viewed the *isnād* as a special grace of God distinguishing their community from others. As such, chains of transmitters were seen a part of religion of Islam itself.[1359] Moreover, people who heard or transmitted *ḥadīth*s often envisioned these practices as sources of blessing, be it through the supplication of the Prophet,

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1355   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 88, 256, 339–40; al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 170. When the sultan could not attend the final session for health reasons, this was pointed out explicitly, cf. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 148.

1356   Petry, Robing 365.

1357   Davidson, *Carrying* 2.

1358   Davidson, *Carrying* 20. See also Brown, *Canonization* 8, 57, 334; Dickinson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 481–5, 503–5. On *ḥadīth*s as prophetic relics, see Wheeler, *Eden* 75–8.

1359   Davidson, *Carrying* 11–4. See also Dickinson, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 489–90; and on *ḥadīth* transmission in the late Mamluk era, see Hirschler, *Monument, passim*.

who according to a famous tradition promised a special reward to those narrating his words,[1360] or by profiting from the *baraka*[1361] of the pious men and women mentioned in *isnād*s.[1362] It seems plausible that Mamluk rulers relied on these widespread understandings of the meritorious character of narrating prophetic traditions by styling themselves as patrons, sponsors, and participants in the recitation of the most highly respected corpus of prophetic traditions during the holiest month of the Islamic year.[1363] The fact that these practices of transmission took place in the vicinity of the sultan's living quarters and were attended by the most distinguished scholars of the realm, along with numerous members of the sultan's court society, must have added significantly to the communicative impact of the event and reflected positively on the ruler's image as a God-fearing and righteous Muslim, and on the reputation of the space where they took place.[1364] Moreover, we have evidence that al-Ghawrī was interested in enlarging the audience of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* recitations performed on his behalf by also sponsoring such events in the holy cities of the Hijaz.[1365]

Finally, we should not underestimate the educational function of the recitation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Usually, a famous religious scholar presided over this performance and issued a hearing certificate to those present, who thus shared—however modestly—in the religiously and scholarly significant practice of *ḥadīth* transmission, and thereby obtained cultural capital.[1366] By making the recitation of the collection accessible to numerous members of their court society, including members of the Mamluk military forces, rulers demonstrated that they took care of the spiritual and educational needs of their subordinates.[1367]

Yet, the educational functions of the recitations of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* did not necessarily end with the transmission of the text. As Joel Blecher showed, at least

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1360   Davidson, *Carrying* 16–7.

1361   On this term, see section 5.1.1.2 below.

1362   Davidson, *Carrying* 17. See also Brown, *Canonization* 346–9.

1363   The recitations in the Cairo Citadel apparently formed part of what Davidson, *Carrying* 85–8, describes as the "increasing ritualization of oral/aural transmission" (85). On the role of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s in religious life, see also Brown, *Canonization* 338–49.

1364   On the legitimating function of these events, see also Hirschler, *Word* 27.

1365   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1806–7.

1366   For *isnād*s as capital, cf. Davidson, *Carrying* 21.

1367   It is unclear whether the participants in the recitation could understand the text. The recitation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* usually took much longer than a few weeks—in one case 210 sessions distributed over two years, cf. Davidson, *Carrying* 76; and in another instance three months, cf. Blecher, *Said* 146. Possibly, the reciter read only selected passages or engaged in "speed reading," i.e., recitation at a pace that made the content hardly understandable, cf. Davidson, *Carrying* 75–9.

during the ninth/fifteenth century, *ḥadīth*s from al-Bukhārī's collection were also commented on during Ramaḍān at the Cairo Citadel in the presence of the Mamluk ruler and other high-ranking military and civilian members of the court, with the Shāfiʿī chief judge acting as the main commentator.[1368] Given that luminaries of *ḥadīth* studies, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, held the Shāfiʿī chief judgeship in the late Mamluk period, we should not underestimate the scholarly value of these commentarial practices, especially as Blecher showed that what was discussed during commentary sessions in the ruler's presence at times made it into scholarly works such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *al-Fatḥ al-bārī*.[1369]

A somewhat isolated passage from the beginning of the second volume of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* suggests that this form of commentarial engagement with the text of al-Bukhārī's collection continued in al-Ghawrī's time. It reads:

> **Question:** When all the *imām*s came together in [al-Ghawrī's] service for the *khatm* of al-Bukhārī in the year 920,[1370] the reciter read aloud that the Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—had said: "Beautify (*zayyinū*) the Quran with your voices!"[1371] He whose victory may be glorious [that is, al-Ghawrī] said: "Undoubtedly and obviously, the exalted Quran is beautifying and thus we beautify our voices by means of the Quran and we are honored by it. Then what is the meaning of this noble *ḥadīth*?"
>
> **Answer:** The Shāfiʿī chief judge said: "What is meant here is the opposite, that is, beautify your voices by means of the Quran, and it is said that it was also transmitted in this version (*riwāya*)."[1372]

Three aspects of this passage deserve further attention. First, the Shāfiʿī chief judge's answer constituted a particularly daring reinterpretation of the tradition in question. This tradition was literally a prophetic instruction to recite the Quran in the most beautiful way possible, that is, beautify it by means of the human voice. To al-Ghawrī, however, this literal interpretation appears to have been problematic, since the Quran was in itself so beautiful that human beings

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1368   Blecher, Presence 272. See also Blecher, Presence 275; Blecher, *Said* 58, 82, 89.
1369   Blecher, Presence 274–82. See also Blecher, *Said* 89–96.
1370   Corresponding to 1514–5 CE.
1371   This *ḥadīth* appears without *isnād* in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, preceding nos. 7105. See also al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Iftitāḥ*, nos. 1015 and 1016; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Witr*, no. 1468.
1372   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ.

who recited it could not hope to make it more excellent, but rather benefited from its beauty. The unnamed Shāfiʿī chief judge, seeking not to contradict the sultan's point of view, therefore suggested a reinterpretation that apparently reversed the literal meaning of the *ḥadīth* into its very opposite. The tradition was now held to include a prophetic direction to embellish one's voice by reciting the Quran. While we do not know how this reinterpretation was received by the chief judge's contemporaries, it is interesting for what it tells us about a high-ranking scholar's willingness to advocate a particular interpretation of a prophetic tradition to please the sultan.

Second, this section indicates that commentarial practices along the lines described by Blecher for the ninth/fifteenth century continued into al-Ghawrī's time. Moreover, the sultan himself apparently used the recitation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* at the citadel to pose questions about the meaning of prophetic traditions—a finding that contradicts the earlier assumption that Mamluk rulers were "silent" during these events and were not "active in the debates of the hadith commentators."[1373] Rather, the *ḥadīth* recitations not only contributed to the presentation of the sultan as a pious ruler who cared about the transmission of the Prophet's sayings, but arguably also provided al-Ghawrī with another stage, in addition to his *majālis*, where he could display his interest in religious scholarship and learning. Moreover, above we saw that one aspect of commentary engagements with *ḥadīth* texts, namely the harmonization of seemingly contradictory traditions, was a prominent feature of discussions about this field of knowledge in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[1374] It seems possible that these debates were linked to commentarial practices taking place in the context of the recitation of al-Bukhārī's work at the citadel.

Apart from its role as a social venue to transmit and comment on prophetic traditions, al-Ghawrī's court was also a center of educational practices related to the production and use of books.[1375] As discussed above, Barbara Flemming was able to identify a considerable number of manuscripts with similar codicological features, which she suggests were produced for al-Ghawrī's library by his slave soldiers. Moreover, Flemming convincingly suggested that the production of these manuscripts might have played the role of graduation exams for *mamlūk* recruits.[1376] At any rate, the existence of these manuscripts shows that written works were not only produced *for* the members of al-Ghawrī's

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1373   Blecher, *Said* 145 (both quotations). On the connection between *ḥadīth* commentary and Mamluk rulers in general, see Blecher, *Said* 54–7.
1374   Cf. section 4.2.6 above.
1375   On the political significance of book culture under al-Ghawrī, see section 6.3.4 below.
1376   Cf. section 3.5 above.

court, but also *by* people closely connected to the ruler. The fact that most of these texts dealt with topics such as stories about the prophets preceding Muḥammad, religious poetry, and mirrors-for-princes material underlines the significance of these fields of knowledge for members of al-Ghawrī's court and connects them to other scholarly court events such as the *majālis*.[1377]

To these manuscripts, we must add a considerable number of other Arabic and Turkic texts that were either copied or produced for al-Ghawrī's library— including, for example, the three main sources of the present study; Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn's *Mawāhib al-laṭīf*; al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*; Haṭiboğlu's *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı*; the collections of al-Ghawrī's poetry; *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*;[1378] and several older works on military and legal topics copied for al-Ghawrī.[1379] Moreover, according to *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, al-Ghawrī's library also held Persian works.[1380] This evidence supports the view that al-Ghawrī was as a "renowned […] collector and lover of books"[1381] who had a sizable and steadily growing multilingual library at his disposal. While the complete holdings of his library cannot be determined at the present stage, it stands to reason that al-Ghawrī's substantial book collection must have had a significant impact on the educational practices and the transmission of knowledge among the members of his court.[1382]

If we add to this information the findings of our analysis of the *majālis* accounts, as well as what we know about the translation projects and poetic activities undertaken by or on behalf of the sultan,[1383] it is clear that al-Ghawrī and his court society were deeply immersed in intellectual activities of various types. While many of their learned practices also fulfilled religious and political functions or provided entertainment, al-Ghawrī's court was undoubtedly a vibrant and important center of learning and scholarly communication. Thus, to characterize it as intellectually impoverished, as suggested in earlier schol-

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1377   Cf. for the contents of the works, see Haarmann, Arabic 87. On evidence for Ottoman courtly book production, see Necipoğlu, Organization 14.

1378   See sections 3.2.3, 3.2.7, 3.3.1, and 3.3.2 above.

1379   Cf. Mostafa, Paintings 7; Eckmann, Literature 314; Eckmann, Literatur 314; Zajączkowski (ed.), *Traité*. See also al-Shādhilī, *Baḥjat al-ʿābidīn* 58.

1380   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 17.

1381   Mostafa, Paintings 7.

1382   Given that many books produced for al-Ghawrī's library are today located in a comparatively small number of Istanbul libraries, a systematic study of their holdings, together with an examination of the manuscripts referred to in this study and other works of secondary literature, might allow at least a partial reconstruction of the sultan's collection.

1383   See esp. sections 3.2.7, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, and 4.2.5 above.

arship, is clearly erroneous.[1384] It remains to be seen, however, how these intellectual activities of the court relate to the broader communicative context of knowledge production and transmission in the late Mamluk period.

4.5   Courtly Education and Scholarship in Its Late Mamluk Context

Our analysis confirmed Jonathan Berkey's earlier characterization of the *majālis* as "truly prodigious"[1385] in their thematic breadth and as a "relatively vigorous exchange of ideas"[1386] in their general character. As seen, these debates, which took place several times a week according to a regular schedule in the courtly space of the citadel, provided a social venue for the presentation and assessment of conflicting opinions. At least at times, those present could openly disagree with Sultan al-Ghawrī, the learned host of these events, as was shown in the example of the debate about whether or not Joseph's brothers were prophets. Moreover, with the court jester Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, we know of at least one participant in these debates whose social role was defined by his freedom to speak out against and even mock the sultan's opinions.

Moreover, the preceding sections showed that in addition to displaying the scholarly acumen of their participants, the *majālis* also fulfilled, inter alia, representational and religious functions, and provided entertainment. Among other aspects, discussions of pre-Islamic traditions of rule, as reflected in the *Shāhnāme*, supported the sultan's attempts to appear as part of the tradition of revered rulers of old and to demonstrate that he partook in the transregional representational Islamicate court culture of his time. Furthermore, the presentation of and engagement with primarily anecdotal mirrors-for-princes material showed that the sultan and those around him were interested in good governance. Other aspects of the *majālis* had clearly religious overtones, as was exemplified by the discussion of *ʿaqīda* and *kalām* topics, the sultan's efforts to be associated only with traditions of Quranic exegesis that were acceptable to Sunnis, or the regular performance of the ritual prayer during the salons. The reading and discussion of stories about the prophets before Muḥammad were likewise of religious and political significance, but also served as entertainment, as did performances by famous musicians and the engagement in various forms of riddling.

1384   Cf. section 1.1 above.
1385   Berkey, Mamluks 170.
1386   Berkey, Mamluks 173.

The picture of the *majālis* emerging from our sources is remarkably consistent, suggesting that both independent traditions of accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*—that is, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* on the one hand and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* on the other—as well as the more isolated pieces of information found in other sources indeed reflect the same series of courtly events. Although it would be incorrect to claim that our sources allow us to reconstruct the precise words and actions of al-Ghawrī and his court society, these texts provide a coherent picture of scholarly communication at al-Ghawrī's court, including the themes central to its debates, the arguments exchanged, and the identity of its key figures. Therefore, we may ask whether and to what degree these acts of scholarly communication were defined and shaped by their courtly context—as suggested in the introduction of the present chapter—or formed part of the culture of late Mamluk scholarly communication more broadly.

A first point of interest is the character of the questions that were of central importance for the *majālis*. As our analysis showed, the participants in al-Ghawrī's salons debated many issues of interest to Muslim scholars in the late Mamluk period more broadly, including such diverse points as the permissibility of chess, the question of the best of all possible worlds, the age of humankind, or how knowledge could be defined. Hence, the topics of numerous *majālis* indicate that these events were profoundly informed by the scholarly communicative context of their time. Moreover, especially for the fields of *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ʿaqīda*, and *kalām*, our analysis showed that the members of the sultan's salons relied on precisely those standard scholarly works that were also central to the outlook of learned people of the late Mamluk period in other social contexts, such as *madrasa* education. This finding matches what we know about contemporaneous Ottoman learned courtly culture, in which works that were widely used in educational institutions figured prominently in the library holdings available to members of the Ottoman court society.[1387]

The fact that other repositories of scholarly questions from the same period are often quite similar in content to our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* further underlines the close connections between learned court life under al-Ghawrī and late Mamluk scholarly culture more broadly. Such repositories include the first chapter of *Nuzhat al-albāb mukhtaṣar aʿjab al-ʿajāʾib* that al-Malaṭī had

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1387   Goudarzi, Books 268, 270; Göktaş, Collection 311–2, 314; Atçıl, Section 372–3; Taşkömür, Books 395–6; Csirkés, Books 691–3.

translated for al-Ghawrī,[1388] or the list of topics in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's codified scholarly opinions included in his biography by a student.[1389]

Other findings likewise suggest that the *majālis* and their participants were deeply immersed in the scholarly communicative culture of their time. The Mamluk period is known as a time that saw the increased professionalization and bureaucratization of the scholarly elite. Thanks to the establishment of numerous salaried posts in endowed institutions that fulfilled religious, educational, and administrative functions, in Mamluk times a growing number of *ʿulamāʾ* could earn a livelihood through activities such as teaching, preaching, and administration.[1390] As a consequence, almost all *majālis* participants held administrative, judicial, educational, or religious positions, for example as chief judges, secretaries, prayer leaders, *shaykh*s of *madrasa*s, or as salaried Sufis. The examples of the famous scholars Ibn al-Shiḥna and Ibn Abī Sharīf, both of whom served as chief judges during their careers and were also particularly prominent among the *majālis* participants, are cases in point. The same applies to lesser-known scholars who attended the salons, such as the *imām* al-Samadīsī who later became chief judge or administrative officials like the *kātib al-sirr* Ibn Ajā. Thus, with very few exceptions, the men who attended al-Ghawrī's salons were not dependent on the sultan's unregulated Maecenasship as free poets or court scholars, rather they held salaried positions, which they, however, often had received through the sultan's patronage. This social composition of the *majālis* appears to be quite typical for the professionalized and bureaucratized scholarly world of Mamluk times. However, we should not misunderstand these finding as an indication that the participants of the *majālis* because they held salaried offices were no longer dependent on the sultan's favor and patronage, as is clear from the cases of Ibn al-Shiḥna and Ibn Abī Sharīf, who instantly lost their positions when they incurred the sultan's wrath. Rather than postulating "the absence of a system of court patronage"[1391] as is done in recent scholarship, scholars should explore how patterns of patronage changed through and because of the processes of professionalization and bureaucratization that were typical for late Mamluk intellectual life.

In their discussions, the attendees of the *majālis* exhibited another characteristic feature of Mamluk scholarship: a decidedly broad vision of the Islamicate world as a whole that paved the way for a cosmopolitan outlook. As Elias

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1388   See section 3.2.3 above.
1389   Cf. al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 38ᵛ–39ʳ, 46ʳ–48ʳ.
1390   Muhanna, Century 349–51. See also Muhanna, *World* 19–20; Leder, Postklassisch 295–7, 300–4, 308; Winter, 'Ulamaʾ 25, 35–6.
1391   Muhanna, *World* 72.

Muhanna noted, the rise of Cairo and Damascus to scholarly centers resulted in "the emergence of an increasingly universal vision in much of the historical and geographical literature of the period, which began to regard its object of study as the Islamic world writ large."[1392] This Mamluk cosmopolitanism also informed al-Ghawrī's salons. As seen, itinerant scholars, such as al-Sharīf and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār, who had spent time at the courts of rulers in the Islamicate east, and foreign dignitaries, such as the envoy of a Muslim-ruled Indian polity, or the Ottoman prince Qurqud, brought new ideas, texts, and questions to the communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court. Moreover, such foreigners both inspired and implemented the sultan's translation activities, which turned Cairo under al-Ghawrī into an—albeit short-lived—center for the rendition of Persian literature into Ottoman Turkish, with *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* constituting its most prominent product discussed in the *majālis*. Moreover, the exchange of information about other regions of the Islamicate world—be it the lands of the Kurds, the Iran of pre-Islamic Persian kings, the Indian frontier under Maḥmūd of Ghazna, or the territory of the Qarā Qoyunlu—was an important feature of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, as our analysis of literary, historiographical, and other discussions demonstrated. This shows how deeply the sultan's salons were integrated into the cosmopolitan scholarly communicative culture of their time. They thereby even went beyond what was considered customary, given that local historians found al-Ghawrī's interest in Persianate culture and its carriers noteworthy, although we know today that this remarkable cultural receptivity to bearers of Persianate learning was not unprecedented in Mamluk court culture.[1393] In any case, it is clear that a decidedly cosmopolitan outlook that comprised, also and especially, elements of Persianate origin was by no means only a feature of the Ottoman period, as is sometimes claimed,[1394] but had blossomed in the Mamluk lands already prior to Selīm's conquest. Hence, our findings clearly contradict earlier characterizations of Mamluk intellectual and literary court culture as distinctly different, both in forms of expression and their level of achievement, from that flourishing under Persianate rulers further east.[1395]

Yet, this cosmopolitanism and the openness of Mamluk scholarship toward the intellectual heritage of the Islamicate world as a whole came at a price: Learned men of the Mamluk period faced an overabundance of information.

[1392]   Muhanna, Century 348. See also Muhanna, *World* 3, 19, 57; Gardiner, Encyclopedism 10–1.

[1393]   Cf. section 4.1.2.3 above.

[1394]   E.g., Berger, *Gesellschaft* 164–5.

[1395]   E.g., Langner, *Untersuchungen* 2.

To quote Muhanna again: Mamluk *ʿulamāʾ* suffered from a "feeling of an over-crowding of authoritative sources, a feeling made especially palpable in the scholarly centers of the Mamluk empire."[1396] In reaction to this challenge, Mamluk authors produced various forms of texts that helped them to organize and review the available body of information that had grown unwieldy: encyclopedias and compilations as well as abridgments, commentaries, and textbooks.[1397] The *majālis* and the texts describing them formed part of the same set of cultural and literary techniques. As events, the *majālis* offered social venues to review the available information, harmonize or eradicate seemingly contradictory statements, and debate conflicting opinions. As literary texts, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provided their readers with a kind of "best of" selection of scholarship of their time and thus relieved them of the need to sift through the ever-growing body of learned writings. Borrowing from Geert Jan van Gelder's characterization of a structurally similar text, we could describe each *majālis* account as a "crash course in medieval […] learning and science in Islam, for it offers what might be called a miniature popular general encyclopedia."[1398] The fact that these "crash courses" focused more on *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ʿaqīda*, and *kalām* than on other fields of knowledge tells us a great deal about the general scholarly atmosphere at the sultan's court.

Furthermore, as Thomas Bauer showed, Mamluk scholarly and literary communication was characterized by a blurring of the borders between religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) on the one hand and litterateurs (*udabāʾ*) and secretaries (*kuttāb*) on the other. Bauer writes:

> [W]e can see the gradual merger between the *adab*-oriented culture of the *kuttāb* and the *sunnah*-oriented culture of the ulama. […] [T]he *kuttāb* gradually ceased to form a distinct social group with its own cultural values. Instead, the duties of the *kātib* came to be fulfilled by people who had received the training of a religious scholar. The result was a rather homogenous group of ulama who became the bearers of Islamic religious as well as secular culture. […] [T]he process of "ulamaization of *adab*" was counterbalanced by a process of "*adab*ization of the ulama," who in the meantime had made the *adab* discourse of the *kuttāb* their own.[1399]

1396   Muhanna, Century 351. See also Bauden, Diplomatics 28.
1397   Muhanna, Century 351. See also Muhanna, *World* 3, 19, 56.
1398   Van Gelder, Compleat 242.
1399   Bauer, Literature 108. See also Bauer, Literature 109–11; Communication 23; Bauer, Anthologien 79–84; Bauer, S̲h̲āʿir 720; Bauer, Adab; Muhanna, Century 352–5; Muhanna, *World* 22, 71–2; Yarbrough, *Friends* 223–4.

The results of this process of the "ulamaization of *adab*" and "*adab*ization of the ulama" can be clearly observed in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Although literary topics were of limited significance for the discussions in the sultan's salons, in those cases where literary questions came up, the discussants addressing them included the usual *majālis* members, among whom *ʿulamāʾ* serving as judges, teachers, and religious functionaries figured prominently. Moreover, a person such as al-Sharīf, who came closest to what could be described as a litterateur among the regular attendees of al-Ghawrī's salons, regularly participated in discussions about matters of *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and other religious disciplines. Finally, in the discussions, the borders between what is commonly understood as *adab* and other fields of knowledge, such as history, at times became almost indiscernible, as our analysis of historical material on al-Fārābī quoted from Ibn Khallikān and discussed in the sultan's salons demonstrated. Taken together, these findings show that the scholarly communication in the *majālis* was shaped by developments Bauer identified as characterizing Mamluk learned culture more broadly.

In light of these results, we can regard al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as not only strongly influenced by the general characteristics of late Mamluk scholarly communication, but indeed as a major center in this communicative cosmos. We may ask, however, whether there is also something in the scholarly communication of the *majālis*—apart from the obvious aspects of its participants and spatial contexts—that mark it as "courtly" in the sense delineated above, that is, as connected to the court as a series of events taking place in specific spatial contexts and as a social group.[1400]

Some of the topics of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* might indeed have been of particular interest to courtly audiences. Historical accounts and mirrors-for-princes material were regarded in the Islamicate middle period as particularly fitting subjects for rulers.[1401] However, according to our sources, these topics did not, by any means, dominate the discussions in the sultan's salons. Rather, fields of knowledge such as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ʿaqīda*, or *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* stood clearly at the center of attention. At times, the *majālis* participants discussed topics that were of special interest to the ruling elite—such as the legal stipulations governing the taking and breaking of oaths—or provided al-Ghawrī with a chance to cast himself in a particularly favorable light, as was the case in discussions about the harmonization of seemingly contradictory *ḥadīth*s. These details notwithstanding, in the general topics that dominated al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, there was

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1400   Cf. sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 above.
1401   Osti, Culture 200.

little that could be characterized as courtly, especially as many of these topics were also discussed in other late Mamluk scholarly communicative contexts.

The one aspect of learned life at al-Ghawrī's court that could be referred to as courtly in a narrower sense were the translation projects undertaken on behalf of the sultan, especially the versified Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme*. Thanks to the considerable economic capital that rulers usually had at their disposal, court societies were an ideal social space for large-scale translation projects that often required years to complete. This applies to Europe, where translation projects have long been recognized as a particular courtly feature of intellectual life,[1402] as well as to the Islamicate world—we need only recall the translation movement of ʿAbbasid Baghdad that owed much of its impetus to the patronage of members of the ruling elite.[1403] Yet, with regard to the actual subject of al-Ghawrī's most prominent translation project, we can understand the production of an Ottoman Turkish version of the *Shāhnāme* in Cairo also and, perhaps primarily, as an aspect of the cosmopolitanism that was a defining feature of late Mamluk scholarly culture, as mentioned above.

Taken together, the majority of cultural practices of learning and transmission of knowledge at al-Ghawrī's court were not fundamentally different from the surrounding scholarly culture. In contrast to Gundula Grebner's characterization of intellectual life at European courts quoted in the introduction of the present chapter, scholarly communication in al-Ghawrī's court society was not "governed by different rules […] than academic, urban, or monastic cultures of knowledge,"[1404] or their structural parallels in Islamicate contexts. Rather, exchanges of cultural capital at al-Ghawrī's court were deeply interwoven with their broader scholarly communicative context, while at the same time they reflected the needs of their participants, including the sultan. The latter thereby pursued educational, but also religious and political goals. This is demonstrated with particular clarity by courtly discussions of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* which paved the way for the development of a genealogy that justified al-Ghawrī's rule over Egypt as inherited from his alleged forefathers, the brothers of the prophet Joseph. Thus, practices of learning and the transmission of knowledge at al-Ghawrī's court were deeply interconnected with the court's religious life and its political culture. We now turn to the first of these two topics.

1402   Cf. Grebner, Einleitung 8; Fried, Netzen 157, 170–5, 185, 187.
1403   Cf. on this movement Gutas, *Greek Thought*; Günther, Education, General. On translations in Buyid courtly contexts, see Naaman, *Literature* 86; in premodern Ottoman ones, e.g., Csirkés, Books 691–2; Necipoğlu, Organization 48–59; at Persianate courts in the Deccan, see Flatt, *Courts* 57, 66–7, 85, 248; and at Islamicate courts in general, see Gruendler and Marlow, Preface v–vi.
1404   Grebner, Einleitung 7.

Religious Life at al-Ghawrī's Court

Our sources offer particularly rich material on religious life at al-Ghawrī's court. Thus, they can serve as material for a detailed study of an aspect of late Mamluk court culture that often receives very limited attention in studies of premodern courts, be it in the Islamicate world or beyond.[1] Given the state of research, scholars might even assume that "in the space of the courts, religion did not play a decisive role that regulated forms of coexistence, research, debate, and exchange."[2] In the case of al-Ghawrī's court, this assumption could not be further from what our sources tell us, as this chapter shows. However, since we know so little about religion at Islamicate courts of the late middle period in general, it is difficult to determine whether and to what degree aspects of religious life under al-Ghawrī were typical for Islamicate courts of his time. Hence, the following sections are largely explorative in character and only refer to other courts in selected instances.

As Caterina Bori noted with regard to the study of religion in the Mamluk period, the question of how to best delineate "religion" is difficult and complex.[3] This is due, primarily, to what she calls "the ubiquitous outreach of religion in medieval Middle Eastern societies."[4] If broadly understood as all "cultural attitudes which claim to have a connection with the divine,"[5] religion is almost everywhere in premodern Islamicate societies, including the fields of learning and political culture addressed in separate chapters in the present study.[6] Yet, the development of a definition of "religion" narrow enough to differentiate this cultural system from others and at the same time sufficiently encompassing to grasp all the different aspects of religion has continued to vex scholars for centuries.[7] Based on Bori's reflections, here, in an attempt to distinguish it from other systems based on different founding elements, we understand religion heuristically as a communication-based "cultural system"

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1 Cf. for the limited interest of court studies in religion, Bihrer, Curia 263–4; von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle, Courts 21; Adamson, Making 24. For the state of the art regarding early modern Europe, see Meinhardt et al. (eds.), *Religion*; Schaich (ed.), *Monarchy*.

2 Oesterle, Missionaries 63. Oesterle refutes this assumption in her study of the Fatimid court.

3 Bori, Theology 58–9.

4 Bori, Theology 58.

5 Bori, Theology 58.

6 Bori, Theology 58. See also Bori, Theology 72; Homerin, Study 1.

7 For important contributions, see, e.g., Stolz, *Grundzüge* 11–34; Hock, *Einführung* 10–21.

characterized by "a founding element [...] presented as something, or some-body that transcends the human dimension."[8]

The present chapter demonstrates that al-Ghawrī's court constituted a dynamic center of religious life characterized by lavish courtly celebrations of religious events, the coexistence of various Muslim subgroups, at times highly sophisticated and innovative debates about theological topics, and concentrated efforts to cast the sultan in the most prestigious religious roles available in the cosmos of tenth-/sixteenth-century Sunni Islam. The members of the court exhibited a keen awareness of the political significance of their religious activities, and it is often impossible to tell where religious motivations ended and political ones began.

This chapter consists of three parts. The first section studies events, influences, and topics of religious life at al-Ghawrī's court. Its primary questions are: What kinds of religious communicative acts took place in the context of al-Ghawrī's court, who participated in them, and what was communicated in what ways? In answering these questions, the chapter reviews religious events at the sultan's court and highlights their immediate and broader communicative implications, using the Friday prayer, the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ as examples.[9] The chapter then focuses on specific religious currents, such as Sufism and Shiʿism, and the way they shaped religious communication at al-Ghawrī's court. Thereafter, it turns to practices of discursive religious communication and analyzes selected religious debates in al-Ghawrī's salons. In particular, it shows how the participants in these events combined various fields and traditions of religious learning to arrive at sometimes highly innovative conclusions geared toward maintaining religious peace in the Mamluk realm.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the significance of the sultan in the religious life of his court. It examines in detail the ruler's role in the religious communication of his court, be it discursive or symbolic. Taking the question of a distinct Mamluk spirituality as its point of departure, the chapter scrutinizes al-Ghawrī's functions in the religious life of his court; he served as (a) a protector of religion and morals, (b) a promoter of religious activities, (c) a participant in religious scholarship, and (d) as a *mujaddid* (centennial renewer) of his time. It shows that a significant part of the religious activities of the Mam-

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8 Bori, Theology 59.

9 This selection is informed by the available source material, which provides more information about these events than about other important religious occasions. On celebrations at the end of Ramaḍān, see also section 4.4 above and on occasions related to the pilgrimage, see section 5.2.2 below.

luk court were intended to provide the former military slave al-Ghawrī with
the highest forms of religious prestige available in Mamluk interpretations of
Sunni Islam.

Building on the results of the two preceding parts, the third section con-
cludes the chapter with reflections on the significance of religious communic-
ation at al-Ghawrī's court. Among other things, it highlights the fundamental
roles of religious communication for the creation and social cohesion of al-
Ghawrī's court society, but also for the interaction between his court society
and the population of the Mamluk realm at large and other non-Mamluk Islam-
icate courts. Moreover, the section emphasizes that the court society's religious
activities, which played central roles in its affirmation of a shared religious
identity and worldview, entailed the use of a highly developed and in part
unprecedented set of discursive and symbolic, verbal and non-verbal means
of communication.

5.1   Events, Influences, and Topics of Religious Life at the Sultan's Court

5.1.1   *Religious Events at the Court*
5.1.1.1   The Friday Prayer
The Friday prayer is a central recurring elements of Islamic religious life, as
is also attested to by the fact that participation in it is obligatory for all free
male Muslims of age residing in a given locality and not exempted from attend-
ance for special reasons, such as insanity.[10] In the premodern period, the Fri-
day prayer also encompassed a pronounced political meaning: Throughout the
Islamicate world, the name of the ruler of a given territory was mentioned
during the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*),[11] making the Friday prayer, along with the
right of coinage (*sikka*), one of the most important "symbols of sovereignty."[12]
This holds true although the practice of mentioning the ruler's name was not
covered by the legal stipulations regulating the Friday prayer.[13]

As a ceremony in the sense defined above,[14] the Friday prayer recurrently
expresses, represents, commemorates, and stabilizes an existing order of things

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10   Goitein, D̲j̲umʿa 593. See also Katz, *Prayer* 129–30.
11   On Friday sermons in the middle period, see Berkey, *Preaching* 12–4; and on prayers in
       Mamluk times, see Schimmel, Glimpses 362–3.
12   Von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 11. On the representative function of mentioning the ruler's
       name, see Oesterle, Namensnennung; Katz, *Prayer* 131–2.
13   Cf. Calder, Prayer 36, 41, 46. See also Katz, *Prayer* 132–5.
14   Cf. section 1.2.3 above.

by means of a standardized sequence of symbolic actions, including physical movements and verbal utterances. It reaffirms its participants' belonging to the Muslim community and, by mentioning the ruler's name, concomitantly corroborates and legitimates the existing political order.[15] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Friday prayer was among the most important religious communicative practices that brought al-Ghawrī's court as a series of events into being.

The sultan's personal involvement, by attending the Friday prayer, constituted one of the most significant elements of these courtly events, and his absence was regarded as alarming by contemporaneous observers, such as Ibn Iyās. When al-Ghawrī contracted a serious eye disease in 919/1513,[16] rumors spread that the sultan had become blind and was going to resign from his office. Although the sultan did his best to dispel such rumors, Ibn Iyās noted that "the commotion intensified"[17] when the sultan was unable to attend the Friday prayer. Thereafter, the chronicler described how *amīr*s began preparations for a coup d'état.[18] The situation worsened over the next weeks as the sultan missed several communal Friday prayers in a row. After more than a month, when the sultan was finally able to fulfill his religious duty again, Ibn Iyās wrote:

> On Friday, the third [of Jumādā II 919][19] the sultan came out and prayed the Friday prayer in full ceremonial dress, and there had been about six Fridays on which he had not come out and prayed the Friday prayer due to the affliction he had contracted in his eye. Then, [his] eyelid no longer covered his eye completely and he went out and prayed the Friday prayer. The people rejoiced about this, and the eunuchs and young men perfumed themselves with saffron. [...] [Previously, people] had spread [rumors] about him, that he had certainly become blind.[20]

In other instances, the sultan likewise attended the Friday prayer to demonstrate that he was in full command of his physical abilities:

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15   Cf. for the functions of the prayer, Oesterle, Namensnennung 156–7.
16   Cf. section 2.1.2.3 above.
17   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 316.
18   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 316.
19   Corresponding to 6 August 1513.
20   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 325. On the sultan's recovery, see also section 6.3.3 below.

On Tuesday, the second [of Shaʿbān 918],[21] the sultan went down to the
maydān[22] and sat there till close to noon. Then he went up to the Duhay-
sha [Hall] [...]. An indisposition in his body befell him and he went to the
rooms of the harem. He stayed there for that Wednesday and Thursday.
Many rumors [were] disseminated among the people, and [the rumor]
spread that he had contracted a colic. Thereupon, he came out on Friday
and prayed in the Friday mosque. He thus proved these rumors wrong.[23]

Similarly, during outbreaks of the plague, Ibn Iyās paid special attention to the
sultan's regular attendance at the Friday prayer.[24] Taken together, contempor-
aries apparently understood the sultan's personal attendance at the communal
Friday prayer as an extremely important manifestation of his ability to rule. By
just participating in this ceremony, the sultan stabilized the political order.

Furthermore, *amīr*s and civilian officials, when in Cairo and physically cap-
able, were routinely expected to join the sultan in his Friday prayer, thus per-
formatively signaling their membership in the sultan's court society.[25] Hence,
the Friday prayer could be counted among the constitutive events of al-
Ghawrī's court as a social body. Its communicative significance was not lost
on contemporaneous observers: In 915/1509, when al-Ghawrī invited a high-
ranking Syrian governor to join him in the Friday prayer after previously sus-
pecting the governor of treason, Ibn Iyās reported the details of this symbol of
reconciliation, in which the governor became, at least temporarily, a member
of the sultan's court.[26]

Through their attendance at the Friday prayer, which was off limits to non-
Muslims, al-Ghawrī and those around him also demonstrated that they were
pious Sunnis. Moreover, the Friday sermon could function as an important
instrument to affirm the court's Sunni character:

On a Friday in [the month of Rabīʿ II 918][27], the sultan gave orders to
Azdamur the *mihmāndār* that he should take the Safawid envoy and his
attendants and bring him to the sultan's mosque [...] to pray the Friday
prayer there. When they came to the mosque, the four chief judges, the

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21   Corresponding to 13 October 1512.
22   On this locality, see section 6.3.2 below.
23   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 281.
24   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 307–8, 311.
25   Cf., e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 17, 132, 307–8, 311, 330, 428, 464; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān*
      i, 325. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 46.
26   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 162.
27   Corresponding to June–July 1512.

notables (a'yān al-nās), and a group of the amīrs assembled there. Then, the Mālikī chief judge Yaḥyā b. al-Damīrī, who had been appointed earlier as the preacher of the sultan's mosque, stepped forward, ascended the pulpit (minbar) wearing black, and delivered an eloquent sermon. In it, he expounded on the virtues of the imām Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq—may God be satisfied with him. It was a memorable day in the mosque, and the Quran reciters and the preachers of the city had come together there.[28]

This episode derives its significance from the confessional identities of the parties involved. The sultan, who acted as the political head of a Sunni polity, ordered the Mamluk official in charge of foreign guests to bring the Safawid envoy to the mosque of his funeral complex. In the early tenth/sixteenth century, the Safawids were representatives of a rather extreme version of Shi'ism and thus, it might seem surprising that the official representative of a Shi'i ruler was even invited to participate in a Friday prayer in the mosque of a Sunni ruler. Yet, al-Ghawrī or those around him had made preparations to ensure that the Safawid envoy would have to sit through a Friday sermon he would not enjoy. It was delivered by the head of the Mālikī madhhab, which was known for its uncompromising stance in doctrinal issues of religion. Moreover, the Mālikī chief judge had donned black clothes, thus sending a strong communicative signal simply by his attire, as black was the color of the 'Abbasid caliphs whom Shi'is accused of having killed several of their imāms. Most significant, however, was the topic of the sermon: It illustrated the virtues of Abū Bakr (r. 11–3/632–634), who, according to Sunnis, was the first caliph after Muḥammad's death, but was accused by Shi'is of infringing on the right of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–61) to lead the Muslim community. Thus, in Rabī' II 918, the Friday prayer was, on the one hand, a thinly veiled provocation of the Safawid envoy, whose reaction is unfortunately unknown. On the other hand, the event can also be seen as an attempt by al-Ghawrī and his court to delineate confessional boundaries, reaffirm their own Sunni identity, and counter any potential critique that they were too lenient in their dealing with their Shi'i rivals.[29]

When attending Friday prayers, al-Ghawrī was on the one hand a Muslim among fellow Muslims; there is no evidence in the sources that he ever led the prayers on an official occasion.[30] On the other hand, when he attended the prayer, the sultan and those around him used symbolic and other means to

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28   Ibn Iyās, Badā'i' iv, 268. See also Petry, Twilight 204; Mauder, Head.
29   See section 5.1.3 below.
30   On the idea that political leaders should lead the prayer, see Katz, Prayer 139–40.

ensure that al-Ghawrī's supreme political status was clearly discernible. Among other things, the sultan had a personal corps of *imām*s and *muʾadhdhin*s at his disposal to see to his religious needs and accompany him on his travels, including on his final Syrian campaign.[31] Having his own prayer leaders was not only an important asset that signaled the ruler's status, it also opened up attractive career paths to religious officials. The post of personal *imām*, which allowed its holder regular personal access to the sultan, was considered so lucrative that at least two of its holders were accused of buying the position.[32] Another token of the ruler's supreme status was his authority to handpick those who delivered the Friday sermons he attended; he regularly chose high-ranking figures, such as chief judges.[33]

The sultan usually attended the Friday prayer in the Citadel Mosque, known today as that the Mosque of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.[34] He could access this building through a passage linking it directly to his living area.[35] Once the ruler entered the mosque, a small parade was held; this was referred to as *mawkib yawm al-jumʿa* (Friday parade) and in it, the sultan was accompanied by soldiers and *amīr*s.[36] During the prayer, the sultan occupied a special part of the ritual space of the mosque known as the *maqṣūra*, a word that denotes a "box or stall in a mosque near the mihrab, reserved for the ruler."[37] Together with the sultan's throne or the military band, Mamluk authors considered this space of the mosque among the "symbols of rule" (*rusūm al-mulk*) which functioned as widely understood signs of the sultan's supreme status.[38] Al-Qalqashandī describes the *maqṣūra* in the Citadel Mosque as follows:

> Among them [that is, the symbols of rule] is the *maqṣūra* for the prayer in the Friday mosque. […] The first who made use of it in Islam was Muʿāwiya. Thereafter, it became a custom (*sunna*) of the rulers of Islam to distinguish the sultan from everyone else among the subjects. In this [that is, the Mamluk] realm, there is a *maqṣūra* close to the *minbar* in the Friday Mosque of the citadel of the mountain; it has the form of an

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31   On the sultan's religious staff during the Syrian campaign, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 35, 43, 77; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fols. 7ʳ, 8ᵛ; Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqiʿat al-Sulṭān* 30–1.

32   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 13, 15.

33   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 128, 132, 189, 348–9, 352, 354, 372; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 324–5. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 39; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 409.

34   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 354.

35   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 46. See also Rabbat, *Citadel* 268–9; Vermeulen, Aspects 555.

36   Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 86. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 33.

37   Wehr, *Dictionary* 900.

38   E.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 6–9. On the symbols of rule, see section 6.3.3 below.

iron grill […]. The sultan prays in it, together with those from the personal retinue of his bodyguard (*akhiṣṣāʾ khāṣṣakiyyatihi*) that accompany him Fridays.[39]

According to al-Qalqashandī, in the late Mamluk period the *maqṣūra* was understood as a very old element of Islamicate court culture dating to Umayyad times.[40] While originally a caliphal prerogative, it was later employed by Muslim rulers more generally to set themselves apart, both physically and symbolically, from their subjects. As part of this function, it was used by Mamluk sultans who had an iron *maqṣūra* installed in the Citadel Mosque; this allowed them to be seen by the congregation while distinguishing them from the rest of the praying crowd.[41] Entering this special space in the court mosque was the exclusive prerogative of the sultan and a select group of his bodyguards who joined him in the *maqṣūra*, probably both for security reasons and to further symbolically dramatize his exalted position. Al-Saḥmāwī's description adds to that of al-Qalqashandī, and emphasizes the exclusive character of the *maqṣūra* by stating that it "is not opened to anyone but him [that is, the ruler]."[42]

Returning to al-Qalqashandī, elsewhere in his work we find the following information:

> [The sultan] performs the [Friday] prayer in a *maqṣūra* set apart on the right-hand side of the *miḥrāb*. In it [the *maqṣūra*], the most distinguished members of his personal retinue (*akābir khāṣṣatihi*) pray at his side. Then comes the remainder of the *amīr*s, their elite, and their group in general, and they pray outside the *maqṣūra* on its right- and left-hand sides according to their ranks.[43]

The arrangement of the Friday prayer at the citadel described in this passage represents an almost ideal spatial model of a late Mamluk court society, at least with regard to its military part. The ruler prays at the center close to the *miḥrāb* in his *maqṣūra*, together with a very select circle of the most important members of his court. The other members of the court are grouped around this center according to their rank. This distinct arrangement of bodies constitutes a powerful and not very subtle symbol of the social arrangement of the

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39   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 7. See also al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 682; iv.1, 314.
40   Bosworth, Courts 361, considers this historically accurate.
41   See also Rabbat, *Citadel* 263, 269.
42   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 380.
43   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 46. See also Vermeulen, Aspects 555.

court, with the sultan as its focal point. His position is further distinguished, as the *maqṣūra* occupies the place of honor to the right of the *miḥrāb*, which indicates the main axis of the mosque and the direction to which the congregation turns in payer. Thus, while the iron structure ensured that the sultan could perform his prayers together with his fellow Muslims despite security concerns, the *maqṣūra* also served as a powerful symbol of his centrality to the court.

The sultanic practice of praying at the Citadel Mosque on Fridays was not unproblematic from a legal point of view. Traditionally, many Muslim jurists, including the entire Shāfiʿī school, opined that the Friday prayer should be held in only one Friday mosque (*jāmiʿ*) in each town or city.[44] For the urban conglomeration known today as Cairo, in the Ayyubid period this meant that there should be only two Friday prayers, one in the ancient city of Fusṭāṭ and one in al-Qāhira, the former caliphal city of the Fatimids. After the latter's downfall, the Ayyubids enforced these stipulations, with Friday prayers only taking place in the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ Mosque of Fusṭāṭ and in the al-Ḥākim Mosque of al-Qāhira. All other mosques in the urban conglomeration were to serve only as *masjid*s, that is, as mosques without *minbar*s, and Friday prayers were not to be held there.[45]

The late Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, however, saw a tremendous increase in mosques where believers could attend Friday prayers. More and more Friday mosques were erected across the Egyptian capital, while pre-existing structures were furnished with *minbar*s and thus raised to the status of *jāmiʿ*s (Friday mosques). In 923/1517, there were no fewer than 221 Friday mosques within the confines of the city.[46]

The legal permissibility of this tremendous increase in Friday mosques remained an issue of debate up to the very end of the Mamluk period, as is attested in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, we read:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Is the Friday prayer in the mosque of the well-protected citadel allowed according to the Ḥanafī authorities or not?"
>
> **Answer:** "It is said in *al-Hidāya*: The Friday prayer is only allowed in an all-encompassing city (*miṣr jāmiʿ*) or in the place of prayer of a city. It is not allowed in villages, because of his [that is, the Prophet Muḥammad's]

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44   Goitein, Djumʿa 593. See also Calder, Prayer 36; Makdisi, *Colleges* 13.

45   Loiseau, City 183–5. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 33.

46   Loiseau, City 185.

saying: 'The Friday prayer, the *tashrīq*,[47] the [ʿĪd] al-Fiṭr, and the [ʿĪd] al-Aḍḥā (feast of the sacrifice) take place only in a *miṣr jāmiʿ*.'[48] A *miṣr jāmiʿ* is any place that has a governor (*amīr*) and a judge who carries out legal regulations and inflicts the Quranically prescribed penalties. This is [the ruling] according to Abū Yūsuf. On the authority of Abū Ḥanīfa, [it is said that the level of a *miṣr jāmiʿ* is reached] when the people come together in the largest of their *masjid*s and it does not accommodate them [all]. The former [ruling] is the preferred opinion (*ikhtiyār*) of al-Karkhī[49] and the predominant (*ẓāhir*) one, and the second [ruling] is the preferred opinion of al-Balkhī.[50]

I say: According to both propositions, the Friday prayer is not allowed anywhere but in the citadel, because the greatest judge and the Shāfiʿī judges pray there. Moreover, the greatest sultan of the world prays there, too. [Furthermore,] there is no doubt that a single mosque does not accommodate [all of] the residents of the citadel (*ahl al-qalʿa*). Thus, both opinions allow the Friday prayer only in the citadel."[51]

In this passage the sultan is presented as asking explicitly for a ruling according to the Ḥanafī school of law. At least two reasons might have informed this choice: The sultan belonged to this school and therefore might have asked for a ruling according to his *madhhab*. However, it is more probable that he requested a Ḥanafī opinion because Ḥanafīs were the most likely to rule in favor of allowing the Friday prayers to be held in the Citadel Mosque. In his study of the pertinent rulings of the Ḥanafī jurist Shams al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090) and some of his Shāfiʿī colleagues, Norman Calder showed that al-Sarakhsī conceded to rulers the right to perform Friday prayers in their palaces, provided the ceremonies were accessible to everyone. This ruling is not found in the Shāfiʿī texts Calder studied and seems to be al-Sarakhsī's contribution to the Ḥanafī tradition.[52] The Ḥanafī tradition was thus particularly "ruler-friendly"

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47   "The three days following the Day of Immolation (10th of Zuʾlhijja) during the hadj festival," Wehr, *Dictionary* 547.

48   On this *ḥadīth*, see also Calder, Prayer 35. It is not included in this form in the canonical Sunni collections.

49   Abū l-Ḥasan ʿUbaydallāh b Ḥusayn al-Karkhī (d. 340/951), a famous early Ḥanafī jurist.

50   This person cannot be identified beyond doubt. The edition of al-Marghīnānī's *al-Hidāya* gives the name as al-Thaljī without further identification. If the reading al-Balkhī is correct, then this is probably Abū Ḥanīfa's student Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī (d. 204/819–20), on whom see Rudolph, al-Balkhī.

51   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 80–1.

52   Calder, Prayer 37–8, 40.

and was, it would seem, consciously selected in the *majālis* to justify holding Friday prayers in the citadel, where they were accessible to large parts of the Muslim population.[53] According to this interpretation, again we can observe how members of the Mamluk ruling elite made informed decisions by asking for legal opinions and choosing, from the outset, the *madhhab* with the position most favorable to their goals.[54]

The answer in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* begins with an almost entirely verbatim quotation from al-Marghīnānī's *al-Hidāya*,[55] which, as seen, appears in our sources on the *majālis* as the most often cited legal work.[56] As is typical for Ḥanafī writers, al-Marghīnānī states that Friday prayers may be held only in *miṣr jāmiʿ*s, a term denoting settlements of considerable size, and not in villages, as deemed sufficient by Shāfiʿīs.[57] He then gives two different ways of defining *miṣr jāmiʿ*s: First, according to the dominant opinion attributed to Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī (d. 182/798), one of Abū Ḥanīfa's principal students, *miṣr jāmiʿ*s are settlements where governors reside and which have judges.[58] Second, *miṣr jāmiʿ*s can also be understood as settlements so large that their inhabitants are too numerous to pray in only one *masjid*.[59]

In a second step, the sultan's unnamed interlocutor applies these rulings to the case in question, that is, the Friday prayer at the citadel. He argues that it fulfills both definitions of a *miṣr jāmiʿ*: The citadel is the place of prayer of numerous judges, including the Shāfiʿī chief judge who often delivered the Friday sermon there.[60] Moreover, the citadel not only has a simple governor, but, as our source states, has "the greatest sultan of the world." Hence, all the requirements set forth by Abū Yūsuf are understood as met. Regarding the second definition of a *miṣr jāmiʿ*, the unnamed interlocutor argues that the residents of the citadel are so numerous that a single mosque is not large enough for all of them. Hence, the citadel constitutes a *miṣr jāmiʿ* of its own, according to Ḥanafī legal doctrine and not only may, but rather must have its own Friday prayer. The interlocutor's statement that "the Friday prayer is not allowed anywhere but in the citadel" should not be taken to mean that the prayer in the

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53　Cf. Rabbat, *Citadel* 268.

54　See section 4.2.1 above.

55　Al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāya* ii, 108–9.

56　Cf. section 4.2.1 above.

57　Calder, *Prayer* 35.

58　See also Calder, *Prayer* 35–6; Johansen, *Contingency* 86–7 (with slight differences). On *miṣr jāmiʿ* in general, see Katz, *Prayer* 130–1; Johansen, *Contingency* 77–89, 97, 104–6.

59　See also Johansen, *Contingency* 87–9.

60　On this function of the Shāfiʿī chief judge, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iv.1, 318.

other Friday mosques of Cairo is not permissible. Rather, the statement seems to apply only to the residents of the citadel who are obliged to attend the Friday prayer in their own Friday mosque, that is, the Citadel Mosque.

The outcome of this debate as narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* must have pleased the Mamluk ruler, regardless of whether the discussion took place in this form in the sultan's salon or received its final shape through the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. In any case, it gave the ruler and those around him a well-reasoned legal argument for the validity of Friday prayers at the Citadel Mosque. Moreover, it provided the ruler with a legal means to require participation in the Friday prayer at the Citadel Mosque for members of his court society residing in the citadel. Thus, al-Ghawrī had at his disposal a legal justification for using the Friday prayer at the citadel as a mechanism of social control, through which he could assure that a significant portion of the members of his court would meet him at least once a week and would be reminded of his exalted status as dramatized through the spatial arrangement of the congregation.

5.1.1.2   The Prophet's Birthday

Among all the religious holidays observed at the late Mamluk court, the celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday (*mawlid*) stands out, because, unlike other major religious occasions such as the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr or the ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, it could not be traced directly to a commandment in the Quran or to a prophetic *sunna*, but, at least in Sunni circles, only seems to have spread from the sixth/twelfth century onward.[61] Consequently, the permissibility of this holiday, usually observed on the 12th of Rabīʿ I, was contested among scholars during the middle period, with many writers condemning it as a *bidʿa* (uncanonical innovation).[62] Other authors defended the feast and argued that if performed without engagement in censurable behavior, it constituted a *bidʿa ḥasana* (laudable innovation).[63] While at times, *mawlid* celebrations did indeed constitute "carnivalistic festival[s],"[64] their more typical elements included

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61   Katz, Performances 468. On the origin and early history of the holiday, see also Fuchs and de Jong, Mawlid 895; Kaptein, *Festival* 7–30; Katz, *Birth* 1–5, 208; Pekolcay, *Mevlid* 1–3, 7–10.

62   Katz, Performances 468. See also von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 76; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 68; Berkey, Tradition 58; Fuchs and de Jong, Mawlid 896; Pekolcay, *Mevlid* 4–7; Kaptein, *Festival* 44–5; Katz, *Birth* 169–207.

63   Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 106. See also Winter, ʿUlamaʾ 29; von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 76; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 69; Fuchs and de Jong, Mawlid 896; Kaptein, *Festival* 45–70.

64   Katz, Performances 468.

recitations of texts describing the birth of the Prophet and related events,[65] invocations of blessings on the Prophet,[66] Sufi *dhikr* ceremonies,[67] recitations of the Quran[68] or *ḥadīth*s,[69] and shared meals.[70]

The holiday was regularly observed in Mamluk Egypt,[71] but historiographical sources provide only limited information on the celebration of the *mawlid* at the late Mamluk court in general and under al-Ghawrī in particular.[72] A typical description of a courtly *mawlid* in Ibn Iyās' chronicle reads: "In [the month of Rabīʿ 1], the sultan celebrated the *mawlid* of the Prophet, and it was festive (*ḥāfil*)."[73] From other passages in Ibn Iyās, we learn that at times al-Ghawrī awarded robes of honor to important military officials during the celebration,[74] and that it took place in the *ḥawsh* of the citadel.[75] Al-Ghawrī expected the four chief judges, as well as his *amīr*s and the highest-ranking civilian administrators, to participate.[76] Moreover, at least sometimes, the sultan used the opportunity to dispense largesse among those present[77] and to dignify important guests, such as the Ottoman prince Qurqud, by inviting them and granting them places of honor.[78] Furthermore, at least in certain years, lavish meals were served to the attendees, who included religious dignitaries, such as reciters of the Quran and preachers.[79] Robes of honor could be distributed among these religious personages as well.[80]

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65   Cf. Katz, *Birth* 6–62, 82–7. See also Katz, Performances 468; von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 76–7; Salmi, Mawlidiyya; Fuchs and de Jong, Mawlid 895–6; Pekolcay, *Mevlid* 16–197.

66   Katz, *Birth* 76–82. See also Katz, Performances 468.

67   Von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 77.

68   Von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 76. See also Katz, *Birth* 76.

69   Katz, *Birth* 76.

70   Katz, *Birth* 67–75. See also Katz, Performances 468.

71   Cf. Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 105–6. See also Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 16–7; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 35–8; Kaptein, *Festival* 48.

72   For the state of knowledge, see Langner, *Untersuchungen* 35; Stowasser, Manners 17; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 56; Schimmel, Glimpses 370–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 11, 179–80.

73   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 66, 96.

74   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 58, 81.

75   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 41, 261, 447. According to Rabbat, *Citadel* 275, from the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century onward, to the early Ottoman period, the tent for the *mawlid* celebrations was erected in the *ḥawsh* courtyard of the citadel. On earlier *mawlid*s in the *ḥawsh*, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 742.

76   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 20, 41, 117, 132, 157, 184, 218, 261; v, 25, 172. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 160.

77   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 117, 157.

78   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157, 184, 447. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 260.

79   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 25, 172.

80   Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 159–60.

Ibn Iyās further explains that al-Ghawrī's celebrations took place in a large, round blue tent originally commissioned by Sultan Qāytbāy.[81] In his account of the *mawlid* celebration of the year 922/1516–7, the chronicler writes:

> The sultan celebrated the noble *mawlid* of the Prophet as usual and he had the huge tent erected that al-Ashraf Qāytbāy had made. It was said that the costs for it were 36,000 *dīnār*s. This tent had the shape of a hall (*qāʿa*). In it there were three halls and in its middle, a dome rested on four high poles. Nothing like it has ever been made in the world. It is made of colored cloth. This tent required 300 crewmen (*rajul min al-nawātiyya*) to erect.[82]

Later, after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, Ibn Iyās lamented at length that the tent was no longer used and the Ottomans had, allegedly, sold it to some Maghribīs for 400 *dīnār*s and they had cut it into pieces.[83]

Given that information on *mawlid* celebrations of the late Mamluk court is quite limited, uneven, and scattered among the sources, a long passage in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the *mawlid* celebration of the year 911/1505–6 is of special significance.[84] Written in rhymed prose, rich with embedded Quranic quotations, and covering almost thirteen manuscript pages, this account clearly stands out, both linguistically and in length, from the accounts of other events in this work. Hence, it deserves separate treatment. For the sake of presentation and analysis, this account, which thus far has almost completely escaped scholarly attention[85] and is therefore given below in substantial parts, is divided into three sections; these deal with the *mawlid* proper, the subsequent homage ceremony, and the religious conclusion of the event, respectively.[86]

The first section reads as follows, with paragraph numbers added in square brackets for reference:

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81 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 117, 447. On Qāytbāy's *mawlid* celebrations, see Petry, *Twilight* 80–2.

82 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 24–5. See also Frenkel, Soundscape 15.

83 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 172.

84 Given the singular character of al-Sharīf's account of the *mawlid* celebration, it is not possible to compare it with other sources in detail. Hence, its reliability as a historical source is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, it deserves our full attention as a unique textual representation of a late Mamluk *mawlid* celebration.

85 Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 76 is an exception.

86 On the political implications of the *mawlid* celebration, see section 6.2.3 below.

[(MS) 118; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38]

The Birth of the Greatest Lord—May God Bless Him and Grant Him Salvation

[1] When the night darkened, and the daylight took a rest, the sultan of the kingdoms of the celestial spheres [that is, the sun] left the blue tent, and the Abyssinian armies of the nightly twilight deserted it, the soldiers of its [that is, the night's] lights descended upon the face of the Earth, and took possession of all kingdoms far and wide. [Then,] the greatest sultan and exalted khān, the Solomon of the time, the Alexander of the epoch, the heir of King Joseph the friend [of God], the true and real caliph of the truth, the Commander of the Believers and caliph of the Muslims, al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī—may God Most High make his rule and authority everlasting, and let the world overflow with his righteousness and beneficence; Lord, as you let the suns of his justice lift the darkness of injustice from all the people in the world, make the tents of his existence stand firm with pegs of eternity, and [make] the length[87] of the tent ropes of [his] stay everlasting, through the glory of Muḥammad, oh Unique One, oh Sole One!—ordered that on the unrolled carpet of the Earth [(MS) 119] be set up the blue tent of which the Atlas sphere wishes that it would belong to the roofs of its dome, and the stars and celestial bodies hope that they would be among the pegs of its doors.

[2] The stars could not be seen in that night, but the eyes of the angels of the lofty assembly were [(ed. ʿAzzām) 39] looking out to gaze at it, and because of this sultanic tent, the seven heavens became eight. It was as if the heaven of the world pointed toward the ruler with the fingertip of the crescent and said: "Have you ever seen something like this sphere?" The sun and the moon circled around it, and made themselves ready to send their essence through [its] openings to gaze at the lofty *majlis*. The sphere of the moon opened the eyes and keen senses of the stars so that it saw the faces of the elite and the populace.

[3] Then, on a Monday, the sultan of the two noble sanctuaries celebrated the *mawlid* of the lord of creation, the Messenger to humans and *jinn*s, and the sultan of the imminent. This day was a [day of] confirmation, a day in which all people are gathered together, a day for all to see [cf. Q 11:103],[88] because it is the day of his—may God bless him and grant him salvation—ascension (*miʿrājuhu*), death, and birth.

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87   The edition omits *iṭnāb* (lengthiness, length).
88   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

[4] On this day, there was a great, impeccable, and flawless parade. On this [(MS) 120] day, the sky gained an abundance of light from the Earth, and this affair is well known and famous among the traditionists (*ahl al-athar*). In the tent on this day, our lord the sultan was like the sun in the middle of the sky of the empire, or like a full moon in the Atlas sphere of bliss. On his sides, there were twenty-four places, and in each place stood a commander of 1,000 [soldiers]. He was like a full moon [(ed. ʿAzzām) 40] without defect, or like a shining moon without blemish.

[5] Then, His Excellency, our lord the sultan gave orders to summon the great authorities, the learned *ʿulamāʾ*, the judges of Islam, the generous *amīr*s, and the viziers of humankind, the high-ranking people from among the stewards (*mubāshirūn*) and governors, the righteous, the Sufis, the *shaykh*s, the ascetics, and the devout from every place, the jurisconsults, the learned, the teachers, and groups of Quran reciters, the *ḥuffāẓ* and *muʾadhdhin*s from among the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Daylamites.

[6] [The sultan] provided [them] with a great and pleasant banquet with many extraordinary dishes, such that no human tongue can enumerate them, or such that if one tried to count God's blessings which came down on his behalf, one could never take them all in [cf. Q 16:18],[89] or [such that] He sent down a table from heaven for everyone in the world.

[7] [(MS) 121] When they were finished eating, reciting the speech of the Knowing King,[90] and narrating the [story of the] *mawlid* of the lord of humankind—peace be upon him—completely and entirely, the greatest sultan of Islam dressed everyone from the noble to the lowly in robes of honor. Because of the exploits of the friends of God, the fortune of the blessings of godliness, and the intense overcrowding of people, the *ḥawsh* came to resemble the place of standing on Mount ʿArafāt, rather than an ordinary courtyard.

[8] [The sultan] bestowed upon them bounties without limits and favors without end. [(ed. ʿAzzām) 41] Had the pearls of the stars not suspected that he would give them away nightly as a tip among the most elevated people, they would have been strung in his rich treasury. Had the sun and the moon not feared that he would distribute them instead of cash as favors among the reciters of the Quran, they would have entered the storehouses of Cairo. The pearls and the glittering stars

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89 Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.
90 I.e., God.

were afraid of his generosity, and sheltered themselves in the sea and the celestial spheres.

[9] I sat in the Duhaysha [Hall] in pleasant astonishment [because of] the sultan's deeds that I saw and the extraordinary announcements of sublime acts of kindness, as I saw a *majlis* [the like of which] no eye had ever seen, and heard a *mawlid* recitation [the like of which] no ear had ever heard. A matter occurred [(MS) 122] to me that had occurred to no one else, and that is, that it would be possible, by means of poetic imagination and intellectual operations, to liken this day to the day of recompense, to liken this bounty to the bounty that shall be given as a reward, to liken the blue tent to the sky on the day of judgment, and to liken the closeness of the sun [on that day] to the closeness to the sultan of sultans—by God, the loftiest simile in the heavens and the Earth, praise be to Him who is far above [every] likeness or equal, there is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing [cf. Q 42:11].[91]

This passage describes—in highly literary form—a sequence of events largely typical for *mawlid* celebrations in the late middle period. It took place on a Monday, between the 9th and the 12th of Rabīʿ I 911[92] (the precise date does not appear in the text). The ceremony commemorated the birth, heavenly ascension, and death of the Prophet Muḥammad, which, according to paragraph 3 all occurred on the same date. While the notion that Muḥammad's birth and death fell on the same date was widely shared,[93] his ascension was usually celebrated on the 27th of Rajab.[94]

According to al-Sharīf, the *mawlid* celebration followed a clear sequence: First, the sultan gave orders to erect the blue tent in the courtyard (*ḥawsh*, para. 1). Then, a parade took place (para. 4), after which the sultan summoned the participants of the ceremony in groups according to the order of their social status (para. 5). The ceremony continued with a lavish banquet (para. 6), a recitation of Quranic verses (para. 7), and a reading of the story of the Prophet Muḥammad's birth (para. 7). The celebration proper ended with the sultan distributing robes of honor and other gifts among those present (para. 7 and 8). By celebrating the *mawlid* in this way, the sultan could hope to find the approval of religious scholars like Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who considered shared

91   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 118–22; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38–41.

92   Corresponding to 10–13 August 1505.

93   Langner, *Untersuchungen* 33–4. But see also Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 81–2.

94   Günther, Gepriesen 41. Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 22, considers the two dates distinct.

meals, Quranic recitations, readings of *mawlid* texts, and the distribution of gifts acceptable elements in *mawlid* celebrations.[95]

Unlike the more intimate *majālis* sessions narrated in most of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, much of the sultan's court society, including people who belonged to the sultan's court only peripherally and those who might have attended only a very limited number of court occasions, participated in the *mawlid* of the Prophet. The sultan was the central figure of the courtly event, both on the level of al-Sharīf's textual representation and, according to the available sources, also with regard to its extra-textual basis. Al-Ghawrī presented himself as the director of events; he gave the orders that marked the transitions from one stage to the next. Moreover, seated in the middle of the ceremonial tent, he was also the focal point of the celebration, around which all other participants were positioned in a carefully devised spatial arrangement.

According to paragraph 5, the members of al-Ghawrī's court society who were present at the *mawlid* belonged to several subgroups. These subgroups comprised, among others, leading religious scholars (some of whom also functioned as judges), military *amīr*s, and the most important government officials. Other participants included members of the provincial administration, such as *mubāshirūn* and governors, alongside numerous types of religious and educational functionaries, such as Sufis, jurisconsults, teachers, or Quran readers. Thus, we can conclude that members of almost all the elite groups of the realm belonged to the court society, be they of military, administrative, religious, or educational background.[96] However, the text specifies that among lower-ranking people, such as provincial administrators or Quran readers, only the highest-ranking figures (*wujūh al-nās*) attended the courtly event and thus belonged to al-Ghawrī's court as representatives of their social groups.

The *mawlid* celebration took place in the *ḥawsh* of the southern part of the southern enclosure of the citadel. As seen above, this courtly space bordered on the sultan's personal quarters and functioned as a liminal space that connected the sultan's personal sphere with the rest of the citadel, the spatial heart of the Mamluk Sultanate.[97] The fact that the sultan celebrated the *mawlid* in this particular space was of considerable communicative significance: By observing the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday in the citadel and not in a space with a predominantly religious significance, such as one of the dozens of large mosques

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95 Kaptein, *Festival* 49–50, 64. See also Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 69.

96 Representatives of the economic elite, such as merchants, are conspicuously absent from this list.

97 See section 4.1.1 above.

in Cairo, al-Ghawrī made clear that this religious celebration was intimately linked to his rule over the sultanate.

At the same time, contemporaries may have understood the religious significance of the celebrations and the blessings associated with them as having a positive effect on the courtly space of the citadel. Many premodern Sunni Muslims viewed *mawlid* celebrations as a source of transferable *baraka*,[98] a term imperfectly translated as "blessing" or "auspicious power,"[99] which G.-H. Bousquet defined as "une emanation bienfaisante qui rayonne des choses et des êtres sacrés."[100] As the location of the *mawlid* ceremony, the citadel could be seen as directly permeated with its blessing, given that *baraka* could be "communicated by association" and was activated through meritorious deeds such as the recitation of *mawlid* texts or the hosting of banquets on religious holidays.[101] Hence, to the participants, the citadel might have appeared not only as the space of their *mawlid* ceremony, but also as a space affected by its beneficial powers.

Moreover, the decision to convene the sultan's court society for this occasion in the *ḥawsh*—and not, for example, the Citadel Mosque—could highlight the close personal connection between the celebration and its host al-Ghawrī. Just as the head of a household would organize the celebration of a religious holiday in the courtyard of his home and not somewhere on the street to signal to his family, friends, and guests that he was their host, al-Ghawrī brought his court society together in a space that directly bordered his living quarters and represented the threshold between the sultan's personal space and the outer world. Other reasons, such as security concerns, notwithstanding, we can interpret this choice of location as a communicative strategy by the sultan, who held the dual function of host and ruler and sought to emphasize the connection between the religious festivities and his own person.

Another observation indicates that the choice of the location of the *mawlid* celebration mattered to its participants, including the sultan: They did not use the space of the *ḥawsh* in its usual form for the celebration, but invested considerable resources to prepare it to suit their ceremonial needs, as was typical for courtly spaces.[102] The central element of this conscious spatial reconfiguration was the erection of the sultan's blue tent that al-Sharīf described in great detail and likened to a celestial sphere (para. 1 and 2). Even allowing for poetic hyper-

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98   Katz, *Birth* 82–4, 86.
99   Katz, *Birth* 50.
100   Bousquet, Baraka 166.
101   Katz, *Birth* 83 (also direct quotation).
102   Cf. section 1.2.3 above.

bole, the sultanic tent must have conveyed an impression of luxury and wealth, as Ibn Iyās' descriptions cited above confirm. Yet, in addition to its function as a symbol of the sultan's affluence and an emblematic token of conspicuous consumption, the tent can also be interpreted as a sign of late Mamluk rule in itself, as Ibn Iyās suggests when he refers to it as counting among "the symbols of the kingdom" (*sha'ā'ir al-mamlaka*).[103] As al-Ghawrī's contemporaries knew very well, the tent had been produced for Qāytbāy, al-Ghawrī's former master and indirect predecessor. By using the tent for his own religious celebrations, al-Ghawrī affirmed the connection between his rule and Qāytbāy's, whom contemporaries held in high esteem.[104]

This use of a tent as a symbol of sultanic rule fits in well with what we know about late Mamluk court culture. Al-Qalqashandī includes tents in his list of "symbols of rule" (*rusūm al-mulk*), on a par with objects such as the sultan's banners or the ruler's throne. Moreover, he mentions blue as one of the colors typical of the sultan's tents,[105] thus establishing a connection to the *mawlid* tent, which did not yet exist when al-Qalqashandī wrote *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*. Moreover, the emblematic importance of the Mamluk sultan's tents might also explain why, after the conquest of Egypt, the Ottomans sold the *mawlid* tent well below value to people who would cut it into pieces, thus completely annihilating an important sultanic symbol of the Mamluks.

The choice and the preparation of the space of the *mawlid* ceremony point to the conclusion that it constituted a courtly event of the utmost communicative significance, one that combined multiple interwoven acts of communication. While a complete analysis of the complex communicative processes that took place during this event seems impossible given the limited information in our sources, several central strands of communication are clearly observable.

During the *mawlid* celebration, most of the communication that our source speaks about took place between al-Ghawrī on the one hand and the members of his court society on the other. In addition, there must have been considerable communication between the members of his court society in which the ruler did not participate. However, since the clear focus of our source rests on al-Ghawrī, such communicative processes were not recorded and are, in fact, almost completely unavailable for historical analysis.

The sultan's performative displays of largesse during the *mawlid* celebration were a central element of the communicative relations between the sultan and his court. By providing the members of his court society with material goods,

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103   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* v, 172.
104   On Qāytbāy's reputation, see section 6.2.1 below.
105   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 9. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 56.

the sultan demonstrated that he cared for their well-being, honored existing
relations of patronage, and embodied the important religious and political vir-
tue of generosity. A pivotal aspect of this courtly enactment of liberality was the
distribution of robes of honor (para. 7), a practice that Ibn Iyās likewise men-
tioned as an important element in *mawlid* celebrations. As discussed below,
in the premodern Islamicate world, granting robes of honor was one of the
most important and widely understood performative communicative practices
of court life.[106]

Another important symbolic display of al-Ghawrī's qualities as a ruler was
his hosting a banquet for the participants (para. 6), a practice that was wide-
spread in rulers' *mawlid* celebrations as a "strategy of piety."[107] Functioning as
a dramatization of the sultan's generosity and godliness, the shared meal of his
court society also potentially helped reinforce a sense of community and solid-
arity among the members of his court society broadly defined, who thereby
came to see al-Ghawrī as their common host and benefactor. At the same time,
they distanced themselves from those who did not participate in the ceremony,
thus reinforcing existing social hierarchies. This aspect of strengthening the
social cohesion of the sultan's court society is of special prominence given that
many participants in the banquet must have viewed each other as rivals for
influence, position, and the ruler's favor.[108]

The fact that the highest-ranking military participants in the celebrations,
the twenty-four *amīr*s of 1,000 soldiers, received special places of honor (para.
4) points to another function of the court event. By assuming their places, exal-
ted above all the other participants, at the sides of and thus subordinate to that
of the sultan, the *amīr*s symbolically demonstrated that they accepted their
current positions in the sultanate. The importance of this act should not be
underestimated, given that the military leaders were al-Ghawrī's most obvious
rivals for the Mamluk throne, and might easily depose the sultan if they cooper-
ated. Hence, their participation in the *mawlid* celebration demonstrated their
loyalty. This becomes especially evident when we compare al-Ghawrī's *mawlid*
celebration of the year 911/1505–06 with the one of his indirect predecessor
Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy, staged seven years earlier. About the celebration held
by Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy, Ibn Iyās writes:

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106   Cf. section 6.3.3 below.

107   Katz, *Birth* 101.

108   On shared meals as a way of strengthening group solidarity, see Althoff, Charakter 13–4;
       Althoff, Fest 29, 36–7; van Gelder, Banquet; as demonstrations of a ruler's wealth and exal-
       ted position, see Althoff, Fest 29; van Gelder, Banquet; and as a way to enact and confirm
       hierarchies, see Johanek, Fest 532; Weller, Ordnen 202.

> The sultan [that is, Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy] celebrated the *mawlid* of the Prophet, but none of the *amīr*s came up to him [at the citadel] except the commander-in-chief (*atābak*) Uzbak and Tānī Bek, the *amīr silāḥ*, some of the *amīr*s of ten, and the four chief judges […]. No one [else] from among the *amīr*s [came] and attended the *mawlid*.[109]

A few days after this ill-fated celebration, Sultan Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy no longer ruled; he faced a gruesome death at the hands of one of his highest-ranking *amīr*s and the latter's supporters.[110] Against this background, the significance of the well-ordered and complete participation of al-Ghawrī's leading military commanders in the celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet is clearly apparent.

The same interpretation of the participation in the *mawlid* celebration as a symbol of obedience and—at least temporary—political loyalty applies, mutatis mutandis, to the other attendees, too. Administrators from the capital and the provinces demonstrated by their presence that the sultan was in command of the civil governing apparatus of the realm, while the participation of Sufis, *ʿulamāʾ*, and other religious functionaries provided the sultan's rule with a modicum of religious legitimation.[111] Hence, it would be misguided to understand those present at the sultan's *mawlid* celebration as merely his audience. Rather, by participating in this event—even just through their presence—the members of al-Ghawrī's court society played an active role that, to a great extent, made the communicative significance of this event possible in the first place.

Yet, both through his role as the host of the celebration as well as through his spatial position in the middle of the participants—"like the sun in the middle of the sky of the empire, or like a full moon in the Atlas sphere of bliss," as al-Sharīf put it (para. 4)—the sultan also employed the occasion of a religious festival to dramatize his exalted position in front of his extended court society.[112] But al-Ghawrī's claims to supreme status apparently went beyond the Mamluk frontiers, as is at least suggested by al-Sharīf, whose literary account of the event casts al-Ghawrī into the cosmic role of the center of the universe.

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109   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 400.

110   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 401.

111   On religious legitimation through *mawlid* celebrations, see also Katz, *Birth* 170; Brown, Ceuta, *passim*; and on Islamic religious legitimation, see the fundamental observations in Donner, *Narratives* 98–103.

112   On whether people who only met rulers on high religious feasts and similar occasions were members of their court societies, see Konrad, *Hof* 227–8.

These universal implications are also attested to in the author's remark that the sultan's court society comprised "Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Daylamites" (para. 5), that is, members of all the important ethnic groups of the Islamicate world, as seen from a Mamluk perspective.

Held on the occasion of a religious holiday, it would be amiss to view the *mawlid* celebration as an event with only political significance. For at least some of the participants, a celebration such as the one hosted by al-Ghawrī must have been, primarily, an act of communication with the divine. As Marion Katz showed, many premodern Muslims viewed the celebration of the *mawlid* "as both an expression of gratitude for divine favors and as a source of religious merit."[113] It is impossible to know whether al-Ghawrī genuinely shared this religious interpretation of the event, although the fact that many of his religious poems engage in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad might indeed suggest that al-Ghawrī sincerely venerated the founder of Islam.[114] At any rate, al-Ghawrī could hope that the investment of considerable resources in celebration of Muḥammad's birth would provide him with a reputation for piety, especially since the observation of this holiday was not mandatory for Sunni Muslims, but an act of supererogatory devotion. Moreover, the fact that the celebration followed the stipulations that religious scholars had laid down as an acceptable way to observe this holiday further enhanced the chances that those who were primarily interested in the religious significance of the event would perceive of al-Ghawrī's activities in a favorable light.

In al-Sharīf's eyes, however, the festivities al-Ghawrī staged were more than ostensible displays of piety or sincere, but not uncommon, manifestations of veneration of the Prophet. At least from his perspective as the writer of a text that sought to praise al-Ghawrī, the sultan's celebrations also had a universal significance in their religious dimension that could be hardly surpassed. In al-Sharīf's words, "the *ḥawsh* came to resemble the place of standing on Mount ʿArafāt rather than an ordinary courtyard" (para. 7). Here the author likened the courtyard of the citadel to what, for Muslims, is one of the most religiously significant localities in the world, namely Mount ʿArafāt, where the climax of the Islamic pilgrimage ritual takes place.[115] Yet, the *mawlid* celebrations not only transformed the courtly space in which they were held, they also turned the day on which they were observed—at least in the mind of the author—into a simulacrum of the "day of judgment" (para. 9). Although there is no evidence

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113   Katz, *Birth* 73. See also Katz, *Birth* 82.

114   Cf., e.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 59–62, 111–3; al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 20ʳ–20ᵛ.

115   Von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 31–2.

that any other participant in the event shared this interpretation, it highlights the way attendees relied on religious discourses and modes of explanation to process their experiences of the sultan's *mawlid* celebration.

The second section of al-Sharīf's account of the *mawlid* deals with the homage ceremony following the *mawlid* celebration proper. Since this part is, at eight manuscript pages, by far the longest of the three sections of the account, and also highly formulaic in structure and content, a quotation of the first two pages suffices.

> [(MS) 122; (ed. ʿAzzām) 41] Then, after the end of the *mawlid*, when it was close to the time of sunrise, the dark black of the night came like a vain thief. It stole the golden knob from the gilded Atlas sphere, and the Roman host [of light] was defeated [(ed. ʿAzzām) 42] by the army of Abyssinia [that is, the darkness of the night]. The eye of the sphere became bleary from this grief, and the lamps and wax candles were lit from the beginning of the night until the time of sunrise. Because of the multitude of wax candles and chandeliers, in that night the face of the Earth was brighter than the sky, as the sun of the sphere of bliss had risen from the zodiac sign of good fortune, and the stars of its victorious armies were shining from the dawn of glory and majesty.
>
> [(MS) 123] Then, the commanders of 1,000 [soldiers] stood up and came forth like angels in rows in length and width. All of them kissed the ground. Then, the oldest of the children of Quraysh, the heir of the dominion and the army, the son of the uncle of the Arabian Prophet, the Hashimite, the Muṭṭalibite, the Commander of the Believers, Yaʿqūb al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh, the caliph of Egypt, stepped in front of them and kissed the ground as an individual duty and as the choicest of duties. Then, the caliph said:
>> "The caliphate is a garment that has been destined for you.
>>> If you wear it, then nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.
>> God gave our pupils the power to see,
>>> Only in order to differentiate between pearls and beads."
>
> Then, our lord the sultan treated him kindly and raised him above all exalted great men.
>
> Thereafter came, from among those who stood to the right [of the sultan], the *amīr* of consolidation, the *atābak* of the victorious army [(ed. ʿAzzām) 43] in the greatest civilized country, the insightful one who manages well, the great *amīr*, kissed the ground as a fulfillment of a duty, and [then] began to speak in praise of our lord the sultan. The great *amīr* said:

> "The virtues are scattered in the world,
>> And, out of want, have not been united over the course of time.
> But thanks be to God, they have come together,
>> In you, in the best way, [despite] their scattering."

His Excellency, our lord the sultan said:

> "Thanks be to God [(MS) 124] who made thanking him a reason for doing [our] utmost, and who lets flow the fresh pure water of thanks and praise from the springs of our hearts to the streams of our tongues."

Then, he treated him kindly with lavish praise and many compliments so that the *amīr* Qurqmās inhaled the scents of kind treatment and the breeze of honor in the here and now.[116]

After the homage of the *atābak* Qurqmās, the text continues with that of the governor of Damascus, whose presence at the celebration Ibn Iyās confirms. In turn follow the *amīr silāḥ*, the *amīr majlis*, the master of the stables (*amīr akhūr*), the *amīr dawādār*, the commander of the citadel (*nāʾib al-qalʿa*), the leader of the pilgrimage caravan (*amīr al-ḥajj*), the *kātib al-sirr*, the Shāfiʿī chief judge, the *nāẓir al-jaysh*, and the superintendent of the sultan's private fisc (*nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*).[117] The final group to pay homage is made up of the various units of the Mamluk army, including the *amīr*s not mentioned earlier and the sultan's *khāṣṣakiyya*.[118] In the case of all the functionaries who appeared individually, the text notes that they kissed the ground in front of al-Ghawrī and recited verses of praise, which the sultan answered with kind words.

When understood as a continuation of the *mawlid* celebration proper, the events described here continued the display of the sultan's conspicuous consumption in the form of lavish artificial lighting, which in the premodern period required considerable economic capital. The events then focused on the confirmation of the existing social order of the court society, an element that was already present in the preceding stages of the *mawlid* ceremony. Yet, whereas the sultan's supreme position, the internal cohesion of his court society, and the submission of its members under his rule were dramatized in a comparatively subtle way during the *mawlid* of the Prophet proper, the same social relations were now expressed with a new degree of clarity. Beginning with the highest-ranking military men of the realm and the caliph, select members of al-Ghawrī's court society performed the ultimate gesture of political submission in Islamicate societies of the late middle period: they prostrated

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116   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 123–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 41–3.

117   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 124–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 43–9.

118   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 129–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 49–50.

themselves in front of al-Ghawrī and kissed the ground at the ruler's feet. According to the text, they thereby performed an individual duty (*farḍ al-ʿayn*), that is, their actions were not necessarily voluntary.[119]

While the sultan and those around him celebrated the *mawlid* proper in a way that gave religious scholars little reason for criticism, the same was not true of the subsequent ceremony of homage. Most Muslim scholars condemned the prostration of one human being before another as irreconcilable with Islam, which only allowed prostration in veneration of the One God.[120] Though aware that prostrations were used in pre- and non-Islamicate societies to express respect for human rulers, premodern Muslim scholars considered such practices deeply un-Islamic and stipulated that Muslim rulers should be greeted just as all other believers, with the formulas used by the Prophet.[121]

In spite of this clear position shared widely among the *ʿulamāʾ*, prostration and kissing the ground as a way of greeting rulers gained considerable currency in Islamicate court culture over the centuries and was practiced at ʿAbbasid,[122] Fatimid,[123] Ghaznawid,[124] Seljuq,[125] Safawid,[126] and Ottoman[127] courts. In al-Ghawrī's period, greeting rulers by kissing the ground was also a long established practice at the Mamluk court,[128] although apparently it was abolished temporarily in the early ninth/fifteenth century.[129] As expressive and distinctive as it was, we can see why Mamluk rulers, including al-Ghawrī, used this practice as part of their court ceremonial despite its religiously problematic character.

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119   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 123. On kissing the ground as *farḍ*, see also Paul, *Herrschaft* 266.

120   Katz, *Prayer* 17.

121   Katz, *Prayer* 17–8, 84–5, 93–4. See also El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 363–4; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 187.

122   Crone, *Thought* 163. See also Katz, *Prayer* 85; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 364–5; Paul, History 408–9; Ali, *Salons* 83; al-Ṣābiʾ, *Rusūm* 29–30, 51–2, 63, 65–7; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 47; Lambton, Marāsim 523; Marmer, *Culture* 20; Sanders, Marāsim 519; Sourdel, Cérémonial 137–8; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 140–1; Oesterle, *Kalifat* 269.

123   El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 364. See also Sanders, *Ritual* 13–4, 17–20, 69, 78, 106–9; Canard, Ceremonial 379–82; al-Jubūrī, *Majālis* 42–3; Bosworth, Courts 361; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 140; Oesterle, *Kalifat* 129, 140, 145, 155.

124   Lambton, Marāsim 522.

125   Hillenbrand, Aspects 30. See also Paul, History 409; Paul, *Herrschaft* 265–6; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 149.

126   Lambton, Marāsim 525.

127   Murphey, *Exploring* 67, 69. See also Muslu, *Ottomans* 56; Reindl-Kiel, Audiences 196–201.

128   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 59; al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 86, 127–8. See also Stowasser, Manners 16; Chapoutot-Remadi, Symbolisme 77; Bresc, Entrées 84; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 30–1; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 25–6; Muslu, *Ottomans* 49.

129   Garcin, Regime 304.

According to al-Sharīf, the gesture of kissing the ground was accompanied by the recitation of verses praising the sultan. While it is unclear whether the words al-Sharīf included in his work were indeed uttered in this form during the celebration, they suggest that spoken words might have been paired with such significant gestures as prostration to underline the meaning and expressive intent of both the verbal and non-verbal elements of communication. At times, these poems constituted important contributions to late Mamluk political discourse and therefore, we return to this material below in discussions on the concepts of rulership at al-Ghawrī's court.[130]

Two characteristics of the participants in the homage ceremony stand out: First, they were mainly, though not exclusively, members of the military. Second, the circle of people who actually paid homage to the sultan in the form described in our source was quite limited, relative to the total number of participants in the *mawlid* celebration. The fact that the sultan selected members of the military as well as the most high-ranking civilian officials to pay homage and demonstrate their obedience to him in this very expressive form suggests that al-Ghawrī viewed these groups as the most important for his immediate survival as ruler. The functioning of his administration and his physical security depended on these men. Thus, political opposition from among members of this group would have had much more problematic implications for al-Ghawrī, than, for example, conflicts with dissatisfied Quran readers, to name a group that was not expected to pay homage to the sultan by kissing the ground. This is not to say that the support of people like Quran readers did not matter to the sultan—it certainly did, and their representatives were hence dutifully included in the *mawlid* celebration. However, it was of less immediate concern than the loyalty of high-ranking *amīr*s or members of his bodyguard, who could directly threaten the sultan's physical security and the continuation of his rule. Al-Ghawrī must have been keenly aware of this situation, as he had begun the long and complex process of becoming sultan during the troubled and violent period after Qāytbāy's death, which in 911/1505–06 was only a few years earlier. Hence, he was particularly interested in ascertaining the loyalty of those who could most directly challenge his position, and demanded that they perform demonstrations of their loyalty on the occasion of the *mawlid* of the Prophet.

The third and shortest section of the account of the *mawlid* celebrations shows the sultan in the company of quite a different social group:

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130   See section 6.2.3 below.

Then, after the evening prayer, His Excellency, our lord the sultan ordered the children of al-Rifāʿ to perform a *samāʿ*. They thereupon put on Sufi robes (*khirqa*) with wide sleeves and trains and danced till the middle of the night. When the sound of the dancing reached the ears of the ruler, he danced with them, that is, with the inhabitants of the hermitages of the celestial sphere. The lord of the sphere dressed himself in their style with a patched blue *khirqa* that was fastened with a red belt (*shadd*),[131] redder than the evening glow; he danced with them and circled around them until the day dawned upon the order of the Creator of night and day.

When they finished the *samāʿ* close to the rising and ascending of the sun, the *shaykh*s, *ʿulamāʾ*, jurisprudents, ascetics, the devout, and the Sufis came together and said: "Oh God, strengthen the reign (*dawla*) of this greatest sultan, and raise the pillars of the justice of the exalted khān, let his banners be raised over the tent of the blue celestial sphere, let his rulings be carried out across the regions and places of the Earth, for the sake of Muḥammad, the best among the choicest of humans, and his family and his Companions, the ones who bear witness and have seen [Muḥammad's deeds] with their own eyes."[132]

The scene described in this section has notably changed. The central political figures of the realm have slipped into the background and the focus is turned to a group of Sufis who, following the order of the sultan, began to hold a *samāʿ*. This term denotes religious events that entailed "public seances, singing, dancing, and the measured recitation of poetry [...] intended to produce religious emotions and ecstasy (*wajd*)."[133] *Samāʿ*s were not uncommon in the context of *mawlid* celebrations, although several premodern scholars viewed them with some mistrust, fearing that they might lead to reprehensible or forbidden behavior.[134] Wearing the traditional Sufi robe (*khirqa*), the Sufis danced in the *samāʿ* halfway through the night, with the sultan joining in as well.[135] After the *samāʿ*, the religious functionaries, including the Sufis, supplicated to God on behalf of the sultan.

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131   Cf. for the translation, McGregor, *Sufis* 217.
132   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 130; (ed. ʿAzzām) 50.
133   Winter, *Society* 188. See also Goodman, *Humanism* 37–8; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 407–8; and on *wajd* Trimingham, *Orders* 200.
134   Katz, *Birth* 76. On *samāʿ*s as part of *mawlid* celebrations, see also Trimingham, *Orders* 207. On criticism against *samāʿ*s, see also Winter, *Society* 188–9; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 407, 411–22.
135   On dancing as a part of *samāʿ*s, see Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 408, 419–22; Trimingham, *Orders* 195–6.

By organizing a Sufi *samāʿ* as part of his *mawlid* celebration, the sultan underlined his personal connection to Sufism in general, and arguably to a specific Sufi order in particular—an issue we review further below.[136] Yet, the sultan not only invited the Sufis to stage a religious event at the citadel, he also joined them in their religious practice of dancing. Thereby, he demonstrated in front of a large audience that he endorsed Sufi forms of piety and was willing to participate in them. Thus, at least for the moment, the sultan became a practicing Sufi, although there is no evidence that al-Ghawrī ever formally joined a Sufi order or submitted to the guidance of a Sufi *shaykh*. Nevertheless, the fact that the sultan physically engaged in Sufi practices is noteworthy, as elsewhere in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* dancing is seen as unseemly behavior in a courtly context.[137] One could understand the sultan's dancing as performative modesty, given that after receiving homage from the leading figures of the realm in a fashion that likely appeared as self-aggrandizement, he now engaged in a behavior that could be seen as inappropriate for a ruler, especially when performed together with Sufis dressed in rough cloaks. Visually, there must have been a pronounced contrast between the lavish robes of honor that the sultan distributed previously and the coarse *khirqa*s that his fellow dancers wore. As Richard McGregor noted, one may interpret the coarse *khirqa*s worn by Sufis as an "ironic reversal" of the luxurious robes of honor distributed by rulers.[138] By joining Sufis clothed in such intentionally uncourtly attire and engaging in a practice other members of his court society might have seen as unsuitable, the sultan demonstrated his humbleness before God directly after receiving homage from the most influential Mamluk officials. While it is impossible, based on al-Sharīf's account, to assess the sincerity of al-Ghawrī's religious behavior in this stage of the *mawlid* celebration, it was well-suited to demonstrate to its onlookers that even as supreme ruler, al-Ghawrī still exhibited the piety and godliness expected from a virtuous Muslim.

After the Sufi *samāʿ*, religious scholars, Sufis, and other religious dignitaries—that is, precisely those people who did not pay homage to the sultan by kissing the ground earlier—offered a prayer for him. Through their act of communication with the divine, the men of religion also sent a clear message of support for al-Ghawrī to everyone present, thus, they considerably boosted the religious legitimacy of the sultan's rule. The fact that the prayer had a clear political meaning was obvious from its text, as given by al-Sharīf: The religious dignitaries did not pray for the sultan's personal well-being or for the fate of

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136   See section 5.1.2 below.

137   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 102; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34.

138   McGregor, Sufis 217.

his soul in the hereafter, but exclusively for the political success of al-Ghawrī's reign. Thus, even as it brought the *mawlid* celebration to a religious conclusion, the *samāʿ* of the Sufis and the subsequent supplication had considerable political implications.

Al-Ghawrī's celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet consisted of complex entangled acts of intramundane communication on the one hand and communicative practices that transcended the human dimension on the other. This situation makes it almost impossible to decide whether this was a primarily religious or political courtly event. In the context of the study of late Mamluk court life, this observation makes clear that differentiating between the religious and the political is often of only heuristic value.

5.1.1.3 The Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ

The last religious holiday that is of interest here is the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, observed on the 10th of Muḥarram. Unlike the *mawlid* of the Prophet, ʿĀshūrāʾ was not among the most important religious occasions for many Sunni Muslims of the late middle period. But it was for Shiʿis, who commemorated the killing of the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā in 61/680 on this date.[139] In contrast to the Shiʿi view of ʿĀshūrāʾ as a day of mourning, premodern Sunnis often saw it as a joyful occasion that entailed merrymaking, the consumption of special dishes, and the exchange of gifts, in addition to a voluntary fast that the earliest Muslims used to perform on that day.[140] Sunnis believed that several important events in the lives of various prophets had taken place on ʿĀshūrāʾ, including the landing of Noah's ark, the killing of Pharaoh in Moses' time, and Jesus' ascension to heaven; thus, this day was singled out as one of particular excellence.[141] Following traditions attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, liberality and almsgiving were seen as particularly meritorious on ʿĀshūrāʾ.[142]

Members of al-Ghawrī's court society knew about the special character of this day, but there is no evidence that it was regularly celebrated. In 911/1505 on this date, the sultan hosted a regular meeting of his *majlis*, dealing primarily with *fiqh* questions about murder.[143] The only elements that make this *majlis*

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139   Katz, *Birth* 113.

140   Cf. Fierro, Celebration 193–4, 197–8. On the fast, see Bashear, 'Āshūrāʾ'. On the observance of the day among Sunnis, see also Katz, *Birth* 113–6, 148–9; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 31–3.

141   Fierro, Celebration 195. See also Katz, *Birth* 114; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 30–1.

142   Fierro, Celebration 198–200. On these traditions, see also Fierro, Celebration 200–8; Bashear, 'Āshūrāʾ' 306–10; Katz, *Birth* 114.

143   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 63–7. There is nothing in the account of this *majlis* that would suggest a connection between this *fiqh* topic and al-Ḥusayn's killing at Karbalā.

stand out is al-Sharīf's note at the beginning of his description, that it took place "on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ" and that it was convened in the courtyard (ḥawsh) of the citadel.[144]

In 912/1506, however, al-Ghawrī celebrated this day in a way that reflected the religious tenet that almsgiving on this day was particularly laudable. Ibn Iyās' account provides us with a rare opportunity to see how a court event staged by al-Ghawrī went wrong, at least in part:

> On the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, the sultan gave orders that the paupers and the beggars should come together at al-Mudarraj Stairway [leading to the citadel].[145] Subsequently, a large crowd of paupers and beggars came together there. The sultan came down [to them] in person and positioned himself on horseback at the foot of the al-Mudarraj Stairway. He began to give each person from among the paupers, be it a man or a woman, young or old, a gold Ashrafī dīnār. Then, pushing and shoving took place among the paupers, such that on that day, three people were killed due to the intensity of their pushing and shoving […]. It was said that on that day [the sultan] distributed about 3,000 dīnārs and voices were raised to supplicate God on his behalf. But then when he saw the pushing and shoving of the paupers, he did not come down [to the place] another time and did not distribute anything else, although he had planned to make another distribution to the paupers.[146]

Al-Ghawrī apparently sought to gain religious merit and display his piety and largesse by distributing alms among the poor of Cairo on a day the prophetic tradition singled out as particularly appropriate.[147] For this purpose the sultan selected a liminal zone at the foot of the spur of the Muqaṭṭam Hill that marked the transitional space between the citadel and the city of Cairo at large. By descending from the citadel and sitting on horseback during the entire event, the sultan used simple symbolic means to physically represent his exalted position. Moreover, he sought to maximize the communicative effect of the event by personally handing his alms to each recipient, thus turning this exchange of economic for social capital into a performance that brought him into dir-

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144   Al-Sharīf, Nafāʾis (MS) 63 (also direct quotation).

145   On this stairway, see Rabbat, Citadel 67.

146   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 94. See also Petry, Twilight 140–1. Anonymous, al-Majālis, fols. 319ᵛ–320ʳ, does not mention any difficulties in its description of the event.

147   On almsgiving as a pious act, see Lev, Charity, esp. 1, 144, 159; and as a duty of rulers, see Lev, Charity 45–52.

ect contact with his beneficiaries. To a certain extent, this strategy of using the poor of Cairo as participants in the event was successful, as the distribution of a considerable sum of money and the consequent supplications (sg. *duʿāʾ*) for the sultan showed.[148] However, staging this event in such a way as to confer agency on the crowd became a problem when they behaved in a way that the sultan had not foreseen; they began to push and shove, and this led to the deaths of three people. The sultan, who had planned to continue the event with another distribution, aborted it and returned to the citadel.

Thus, what was intended as a strong symbolic and performative display of the sultan's largesse and godliness to a large group of participants and onlookers ended, at least in part, in failure. It is telling that when this event took place in 912/1506, the sultan not only brought the distribution of alms to a premature end, but, according to Ibn Iyās' chronicle, for the next five years he did not engage in any special activities on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ. When he resumed performative demonstrations of his liberality on ʿĀshūrāʾ, he did so in an entirely different form, as we see below.

How can we explain that this courtly event was not successful? When focusing on the sultan as the person who initiated it, at least two possible interrelated explanations come to mind: First, the sultan chose an inappropriate method of communication, namely, distributing the alms in person. Though well-suited to maximize the symbolic effect of the event, the fact that the coins were dispensed by a single person in what appears to have been a series of face-to-face interactions necessarily created a bottleneck situation in which all of the beneficiaries had to wait until they had direct access to the ruler. It seems reasonable to assume that some of the paupers might have been afraid of missing their opportunity, if the sultan stopped the distribution before it was their turn; therefore, they started to push and shove. Hence, one of the reasons for the failure of the event lay in the inappropriate mode of distribution that, while apt for maximizing the communicative impact of the event, was inappropriate to manage the onslaught of the crowd.

Second, the sultan apparently underestimated the paupers' agency as active participants in the distribution. He seems to have envisioned a procedure in which his beneficiaries would simply wait their turn, without actively influencing the course of the event. When the paupers began to actively shape the event by trying to improve their position in the waiting crowd, the sultan lost control of the distribution and could only react by terminating it.

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148   For another contemporaneous source indicating that al-Ghawrī was renowned for his generosity, see Martyr, *Legatio* 270–1.

A fundamental factor in the sultan's misjudgment of the situation might have been his experience; he was used to staging ceremonies and rituals with members of his court society who had participated in similar events and knew what was expected from them. This interpretation becomes even more plausible when we compare the sultan's ʿĀshūrāʾ celebration of 912/1506 with what Ibn Iyās wrote about the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ of the year 918/1512:

> On Sunday, the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, the sultan went down [from the citadel], betook himself to the Nilometer,[149] and sat down in the palace that he had built there. A group of *amīr*s was with him. He stayed there till close to the sunset prayer and amused himself greatly on that day. He hosted there a lavish banquet and had singers and musicians brought before him. There was a jester (*shakhṣ muḍḥik*) named ʿAlī Bāy present who played the imp (*ʿifrīt*) during the *maḥmal* procession.[150] He stood up and danced, then he dragged the prefect (*wālī*) Kurtbay [to his feet] and made him dance, then he dragged the deputy *amīr ākhūr* Aqbāy al-Ṭawīl [to his feet] and made him dance, then he dragged the *muḥtasib* Barakāt b. Mūsā [to his feet] and made him dance, then he dragged the money changer ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm [to his feet] and made him dance—he was fat (*jasīm*) and the sultan laughed about him. Then, roses, flowers, fruits, and sweetmeats were scattered in front of him and the *mamlūk*s snatched them. It was an amazing day.[151]

This ʿĀshūrāʾ celebration was notably different from the one the sultan had staged six years earlier. Rather than engaging in religiously recommended almsgiving, this time, the sultan joined the merrymaking common among Sunnis on this holiday. The sultanic celebration took place in a courtly space outside the citadel, namely the palace the sultan had erected on the Nile island of al-Rawḍa near the Nilometer.[152] Purpose-built for the sultan's pleasure outings, the palace offered a less politically charged space than the citadel, but was at the same time easily accessible to the sultan and offered a degree of seclusion that other ceremonial spaces, such as, for example, the sultan's newly built *maydān*, could not provide.

Moreover, unlike the ʿĀshūrāʾ event of 912/1506, this time the participants largely consisted of selected members of the sultan's court society. In addition to the sultan, there were entertainers, some *mamlūk*s, and several high- and

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149   On this structure, see Popper, *Nilometer*.

150   On this event, see section 5.2.2 below.

151   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 254–5.

152   On the sultan's building program, see section 6.3.2 below.

middle-ranking officeholders. As members of the sultan's court society, these men knew how to behave in a courtly context.

The only real outsider who actively took part in the celebration was also one of its central figures: The jester ʿAlī Bāy. As argued above, jesters could function as liminal figures in courtly contexts,[153] and there is evidence that in this case ʿAlī Bāy played the role of a man who stood betwixt and between social boundaries and categories. First, he engaged in dancing, a practice which members of the Mamluk court viewed as unseemly[154] and which this time—unlike the Sufis' dance during the *mawlid* of the Prophet—could not be justified on religious grounds. Moreover, while dancing in the sultan's presence might have been accepted to a certain degree by a man who earned his living by making other people laugh, ʿAlī Bāy evidently crossed social boundaries when he made high-ranking figures such as the *muḥtasib* and the *wālī*—who, ironically, were responsible for maintaining law and order in the streets of Cairo—dance with him. Ibn Iyās' language clearly indicates that ʿAlī Bāy more or less compelled these men to dance with him. The chronicler uses the verbs *saḥaba* (to drag, to draw along)[155] and *raqqaṣa* (to make dance)[156] to indicate that ʿAlī Bāy was not only the active party here, but indeed forced others to join him. The result was, at least in one case, embarrassing for ʿAlī Bāy's dancing partners, given that the sultan laughed at ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm because of his corpulence. After the dance, the sultan had fruits, sweets, and other gifts distributed in a playful form to those present, with the sultan's slave soldiers rushing to grab their share.

What was the communicative intent of this ʿĀshūrāʾ celebration, which took such a notably different form than the one held six years earlier? There are at least three possible interrelated answers to this question. First, by distributing sweets—a typical gift on ʿĀshūrāʾ[157]—to members of his court in the pleasant atmosphere of his island palace, al-Ghawrī demonstrated his generosity and largesse, albeit in quite a different form than he had by giving alms to the poor. Second, through the celebration of ʿĀshūrāʾ, the sultan reaffirmed his general reputation as a connoisseur of music and refined social gatherings—a positive character trait that even Ibn Iyās acknowledged in the sultan's first obituary. Third, the amusing celebration and especially the transgression of social boundaries during the dance reaffirmed the social cohesion of the court society and brought about a release of tensions among the participants. In this

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153   Cf. section 4.1.2.4 above. On ʿAlī Bāy in this context, see Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 180.
154   Cf. section 4.1.1 above.
155   Lane, *Lexicon* iv, 1314.
156   Lane, *Lexicon* iii, 1136.
157   Langner, *Untersuchungen* 31.

specific form, such a reinforcement of social bonds—a practice that resembles modern-day "team building" measures—was only possible in the sheltered space of the sultan's palace, which was restricted to members of the sultan's court and their servants.

Interestingly, the religious character of the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ went almost completely unnoticed in this celebration, apart from the fact that the sultan evidently viewed this day as a joyful event, as was common among Sunnis. This observation is relevant further below, when we review the notion, found in both primary sources and secondary literature, that al-Ghawrī had Shiʿi leanings or at the least, was indifferent toward Shiʿism.[158]

Taken together, we see that the observation of the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ at the sultan's court was characterized by tightly interwoven religious and political communicative functions. The celebrations of this holiday contributed to the constitution and stabilization of the court as a social entity, but also entailed a risk of going wrong, when people who did not belong to the ruler's court society were involved.

5.1.2 *Sufism at al-Ghawrī's Court*

Ibn Iyās notes in his first obituary of al-Ghawrī that, among the ruler's positive character traits, he "had great faith in pious people and Sufis (*fuqarāʾ*)."[159] Indeed, Sufism was a major element in the religious life of the sultan's court. Here, we review three specific forms in which our sources attest to Sufism at al-Ghawrī's court; it appeared as an intellectual tradition expressed in verbal—both symbolic and discursive—communication, as a religious practice during courtly events, and as a social phenomenon that shaped the sultan's court society.[160]

As an intellectual tradition, Sufism left an impact on several texts produced in the social context of al-Ghawrī's court. Accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt wa-nawādir* feature entertaining and edifying stories about Sufis such as Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī,[161] Ibrāhīm b. Adham al-Balkhī,[162] Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 185/801),[163] Sahl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896),[164] and

158   See section 5.1.3 below.
159   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89. For *fuqarāʾ* as Sufis, cf. Winter, *Society* 61; Ohtoshi, Reflected 312; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 259.
160   My understanding of Sufism as a distinct religious tradition follows Taylor, *Vicinity* 12–4.
161   Anonymous, *Majmūʿ ḥikāyāt* fols. 37ᵛ–51ᵛ; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 13ʳ–14ʳ.
162   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 90ᵛ–93ʳ.
163   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 99ᵛ–100ʳ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 15; (ed. ʿAzzām) 15.
164   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 14ᵛ–15ʳ.

Muḥammad Ibn Khafīf al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/982).[165] The inclusion of stories about these Sufis in these texts suggests that members of al-Ghawrī's court viewed the deeds of these pious people as relevant to their own lives as Muslims. Moreover, they attest to the fact that these early Sufis were seen to represent such an important aspect of the history of the *umma* that their stories continued to be recounted and recorded in writing centuries after their death.

In addition to these narrative references to important aspects of the intellectual tradition of Sufism, we find in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* also, though very rarely, accounts of discussions about Sufi terminology and doctrines. Apart from reflections on the different kinds of "friends of God" (*awliyāʾ*),[166] the most prominent issue debated pertained to the Sufi terminology in ʿUmar b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. As mentioned above,[167] the question of the religious acceptability of the doctrines of this Sufi poet, who was inspired by the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), was an issue of heated debate in the late Mamluk period. Given that Th. Emil Homerin and others have analyzed this debate in great detail, suffice it to mention here that members of the religious establishment, including al-Ghawrī's Ḥanafī chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna and his father, opined that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had effectively left the fold of Islam by including statements of unbelief in his poetry. By contrast, other late Mamluk scholars and Sufis argued that when interpreted allegorically, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry was religiously and legally acceptable. The debate came to a temporary end when Sultan Qāytbāy ruled in favor of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his supporters.[168]

Nevertheless, there is evidence that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry continued to attract attention at the Mamluk court after Qāytbāy's reign. In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, we read:

> **Question** about the saying of *shaykh* ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ:
>   My heart tells me You are my destruction;
>   my spirit be Your ransom whether You know it or not.[169]

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165 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 23ᵛ–24ʳ.

166 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 149–50, 274; (ed. ʿAzzām) 45–6.

167 See section 4.1.2.2 above.

168 Winter, *Society* 163–4. See also, e.g., Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 439–43; Berkey, *Formation* 243–4; Berkey, Culture and Society 378; Homerin, *Poet* 1, 30–1, 33, 54–75; Homerin, Detractors 243; Knysh, *Tradition* 210–5, 219, 221–2; Sartain, *Biography* 36–7, 54–5; Berkey, Storytelling 59–60. Note also the discussion about the applicability of "orthodoxy" in the analysis of Sufism in McGregor, Problem; Knysh, Essay.

169 Trans. Homerin, *Passion* 70 (slightly modified). For the verse, see Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān* 177.

His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "There is no doubt that the one who is addressed by this speech is God Most High. What then is the meaning of 'whether You know it or not,' as He Most High knows the particulars and the universals."

Answer: "The scholars have mentioned that what is meant here by 'knowledge' is [actually] 'recompense' meaning 'my spirit be Your ransom whether You recompense me for it or not.' Something similar is found in the great Quran: 'He lets them[170] enter the garden He made known to them [or: He gave them in recompense, *'arrafa lahum*]'[171] [Q 47:6]."[172]

The issue discussed here was serious: Did Ibn al-Fāriḍ state in his poetry that God, the Omniscient, did not know about a human being's actions? If so, accusations of unbelief against Ibn al-Fāriḍ might be considered well-founded. As in earlier debates about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, however, an unnamed interlocutor in the sultan's *majlis* argued that the line in question would not be religiously problematic if it were interpreted figuratively. According to this interpretation, the issue here was not God's knowledge, but the reward God would bestow or not bestow on human beings for their actions. Given that in Ashʿarī thought, God was perceived as totally free to reward or not reward humans for their actions as He wished,[173] the statement "whether You recompense me for it or not" was theologically acceptable for Sunni Muslims of the middle period. To support this interpretation, the unnamed interlocutor adduced a verse from the Quran in which the verbal root in question could likewise be associated with both "knowledge" and "recompense."

This passage shows that even almost three centuries after Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death and years after the debate about the poet's religious status had been brought to a temporary end by Qāytbāy, the question of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's alleged unbelief was still relevant enough to be discussed in al-Ghawrī's salons. This not only speaks to the popularity of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses during the last decades of Mamluk rule, but also underlines that Sufi poetry was of interest to members

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170   The manuscript has *yudkhilukum* (he lets you enter) instead of *yudkhiluhum* (he lets them enter).

171   My translation. Lane, *Lexicon* v, 2013–4, does not mention "to recompense" as a translation of the second form of the root *ʿ-r-f*, but gives "to requite" for the related fifth form.

172   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 153; (ed. ʿAzzām) 46. See also Berkey, Mamluks 171.

173   Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 24. See also Lange, *Paradise* 139, 175–6; Antes, *Prophetenwunder* 70.

of al-Ghawrī's court—and, if we are to believe the information in our source, to the sultan himself.[174]

Moreover, the outcome of the conversation narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* indicates that the pro-Ibn al-Fāriḍ side that had prevailed at the Mamluk court during Qāytbāy's time still predominated, and that members of the Mamluk elite continued to use their interpretative abilities to silence detractors of this Sufi's poetry. This is especially noteworthy as the chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, a well-known critic of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, played a central role in al-Ghawrī's *majlis*. Ibn al-Shiḥna's censure of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, however, does not appear anywhere in the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. This might have been a consequence of the generally positive stance toward Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his Sufi poetry that predominated at al-Ghawrī's court: When dealing with the reign of the Mamluk ruler Khushqadam (r. 865–72/1461–7), *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* mentions two important deeds of this ruler, namely, his wise choice of a political advisor and his successful prevention of a group of people who schemed to pronounce Ibn al-Fāriḍ an unbeliever (*takfīr*), exhume his body, and burn it.[175] As if this account would not have been enough to make clear his positive stance toward Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* added the formula "may God let us benefit from his blessing"[176] after the first appearance of the Sufi poet's name.

This positive evaluation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his writings aligns well with what we know about the production of Sufi poetry at al-Ghawrī's court. As discussed above, Sultan al-Ghawrī himself was acknowledged as the author of Sufi poems in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic.[177] Several of these poems contain elements making clear that the texts were part of the discursive tradition of Sufism. Four characteristics deserve special attention here: the mention of famous Sufis, references to Sufi practices, the incorporation of motifs typical of Sufi poetry, and the employment of central concepts of technical Sufi terminology. Since a detailed study of these characteristics must be part of a comprehensive analysis of al-Ghawrī's poetic production that cannot be undertaken here, the following remarks are intended only to demonstrate, through particularly clear-cut examples, the presence of these elements in the sultan's verses.[178]

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174 On Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry at the contemporaneous Ottoman court, see Kafadar and Karamustafa, Books 444, 457, 459, 468, 477, 500; Qutbuddin, Books 607–9, 616, 618–9.

175 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 60ᵛ.

176 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 60ᵛ.

177 Cf. sections 3.2.7 and 3.3.1 above.

178 On this topic and some of the following examples, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

Al-Ghawrī apparently had a lively interest in the famous early Iraqi Sufi al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). In four of the Ottoman Turkish poems we know to be written by al-Ghawrī, we find references to al-Ḥallāj by name, as a kind of spiritual role model. Typical examples include:

> It is necessary to come to God's path like Manṣūr, look at Manṣūr.
> He was not worried as the stones [were thrown at him], while giving up
>   his head.[179]

> My heart desires to unveil the secret of "Anā al-Ḥaqq" again, like Manṣūr
> To the public; seemingly, it does not know the gallows of Your tresses.[180]

These texts indicate that al-Ghawrī viewed al-Ḥallāj, who was executed for his religious positions, as a true Sufi who remained faithful to his love for the divine despite the consequences. Through his references to the famous Sufi, al-Ghawrī positioned himself squarely in a tradition of Sufi literature in which al-Ḥallāj served as an emblematic figure representing the true followers of the path.[181]

The continual invocation of God known as *dhikr*, which constitutes part of the religious practice of many Sufis, was mentioned repeatedly in al-Ghawrī's poetry.[182] In an Ottoman Turkish poem, the lyrical "I" reminds himself: "Do not take from your tongue the *dhikr* for a single breath, this is enough to prevent [you from] hellfire."[183] In another poem, the ongoing recitation of the formula *"lā ilāha illā Llāh"* is likened to a sword (*hançer*) used to fight the appetitive soul (*nefs*).[184] Using the first part of the *shahāda* as a kind of refrain, the poem in question is reminiscent of a *dhikr* text. The same also applies to one of the sultan's Arabic poems that consists largely of invocations of God's beautiful names and recommends regular *dhikr* as a means to achieve intimacy (*uns*) with God.[185]

In several of al-Ghawrī's poems, motifs and technical terms known from other Sufi writings figure prominently. One of his Arabic poems consists

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179   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 71, 120, trans. Yalçın (slightly modified).
180   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 105, 144, trans. Yalçın (slightly modified). For other references to al-Ḥallāj, see Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 73, 77, 122, 125.
181   Al-Ḥallāj's legacy in later authors is studied in Massignon, *Passion* ii.
182   On *dhikr*, see, e.g., Trimingham, *Orders* 194–207.
183   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 70, 119, trans. Yalçın (slightly modified).
184   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 59, 111.
185   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 2ᵛ–4ᵛ; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubarāk*, fols. 70ᵛ–71ʳ.

primarily of reflections on the Sufi concept of *'ishq* (love, passion),[186] a topic that one of his Ottoman Turkish texts takes up in the form of the well-known metaphor of the Sufi as a moth flying around a candle that represents the divine:[187]

> The one who falls in love's fire burns evening and morning.
> He is a moth that falls onto the candle and burns its wings and feathers.[188]

Other poems focus on the Sufi concept of subjugating one's appetitive soul:

> Those who have been duped by this world have not reached [His] presence.
> Those who do not abase their lower self (*nefs*) will not reach glory.[189]

In light of this evidence, it is not surprising that scholars argued that the sultan must have been a member of a Sufi order, based solely on al-Ghawrī's poetry.[190] This assumption, although thus far completely unproven, says a great deal about the character of al-Ghawrī's poetry. Likewise, H.T. Norris pointed to the Sufi character of the sultan's verses and argued they were probably influenced by the Sufi poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ or Nesīmī (d. ca. 807/1404–5).[191] This is supported by Ibn Iyās' remark that al-Ghawrī was sympathetic to the Nasīmiyya, a Sufi group that traced its origins back to the latter poet.[192]

We are on more certain ground regarding the sultan's titles, namely *sulṭān al-'ulamā'* and *sulṭān al-'ārifīn*. As discussed above,[193] these titles were also found in other Islamicate texts from the middle period. There, especially the former appellation that highlighted its bearer's special insight was closely associated with influential Sufis who, through it, claimed to be "the spiritual counterpart of sovereign authority over the body politic of Sufis and scholars,"[194] as Hüseyin

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186   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 25ʳ–27ᵛ. On *'ishq*, see, e.g., Arkoun, ʿIshḳ 119.

187   On this common metaphor, see, e.g., Chittick, *Path* 221–3, 231, 330, 337.

188   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 93, 136, trans. Yalçın.

189   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 103, 143, trans. Yalçın.

190   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 40; Meriç, Guri'nin Şiirleri 291.

191   Norris, Aspects 165, 168–9. On Nesīmī, see, e.g., Babinger, Nesīmī; and on the Sufi character of the poems, see also Dankoff, Review 305.

192   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 88. See also Massignon, *Passion* ii, 250, 253–4; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 91, 126; Flemming, Perser 84; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 273.

193   Cf. section 3.1.2.2 above.

194   Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 116.

Yılmaz notes. By applying these titles to al-Ghawrī, members of his court might have sought to indicate that the sultan was not only a worldly ruler, but also a high-ranking intellectual authority, as conceptualized in specific traditions of Sufi thought.

Thus, there can be no doubt that al-Ghawrī and those around him took part in the intellectual and literary tradition of Sufi poetry, as is amply attested in their writings.[195] Moreover, their writings could be read to suggest that al-Ghawrī was so deeply integrated into the Sufi tradition that he could be considered a Sufi authority in his own right. How, then, did this Sufi outlook translate into the religious practice of the court?

Somewhat surprisingly given al-Ghawrī's interest in Sufism, Sufi ceremonies and rituals were, according to everything we know, not a regular part of the religious events of his court. The *samāʿ* ceremony that formed part of the *mawlid* celebration of 911/1505–6 was the only courtly event of this kind mentioned in our sources—a fact that probably added to its symbolic impact as part of a carefully staged event.[196]

The only recurring religious practice at court associated with Sufism was the visitation of the graves of prominent religious figures—often Sufis—perceived

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195   In contrast, the number of Sufi works in the narrower sense known to have been part of al-Ghawrī's library appears to be quite limited. Examples of pertinent works include Muḥammad b. Muẓaffar al-Dīn al-Ṣiddiqī's *ʿUjālat al-waqt* preserved in ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1575 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 144) and the anonymous work *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn fī akhbār al-ṣāliḥīn* preserved in ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 178 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 182–3). The sultan's library did include, however, a significant number of prayer books, collections of supplicatory texts, and related works, some of which were heavily influenced by Sufism. Pertinent surviving manuscripts include, e.g., ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 80 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 301; Ohta, Bindings 219; Flemming, Activities 258); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 82 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 331); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 84 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 321; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 262; Flemming, Activities 258); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 85 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 310–1; Flemming, Activities 258); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 88 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 320–1; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 262; Flemming, Activities 257); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 137 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 310); ᴍs Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 398, fols. 18ᵛ–22ʳ [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 414); ᴍs Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. N. F. 251 (see Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 261; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. i, 293; Duda; *Handschriften* ii.1, 124–5).

196   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 75, assumes that two other instances where music is mentioned at courtly events staged by al-Ghawrī "must have been related to Sufi rituals and *samāʿ*." There is no clear-cut evidence supporting this assumption.

to be repositories of *baraka*; this activity also played an important role in the practices and teachings of Sufis groups.[197] This practice, known in Arabic as *ziyāra*, has received considerable scholarly attention, including Christopher S. Taylor's seminal study *In the Vicinity of the Righteous:* Ziyāra *and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (1999). Taking Taylor's monograph as a point of departure, here we focus directly on the visitation of graves in the context of al-Ghawrī's court.[198]

Ibn Iyās mentions about half a dozen instances in which the sultan went to the Cairo cemetery area of al-Qarāfa and other places to visit the graves of revered people.[199] Al-Ghawrī's first visit (as sultan) to graves, that we know of, took place in 913/1508, immediately after the death of the Mālikī chief judge Burhān al-Dīn al-Damīrī, who had been an important member of al-Ghawrī's court society. Ibn Iyās writes:

> When the sultan had verified [that al-Damīrī had died], he went to al-Qarāfa to visit *imām* al-Shāfiʿī and *imām* al-Layth [b. Saʿd]—may God be pleased with both of them. He descended from his horse and visited them humbly. On this day, he gave a considerable sum as alms. This was the first time that he went down [from the citadel on the Muqaṭṭam Hill to al-Qarāfa] as sultan.[200]

The sultan visited the same places again in 920/1514 when he learned about the impending military conflict between the Ottomans and the Safawids:

> On Thursday, the 19th [of Jumādā I],[201] the sultan went down and visited the domed sepulcher (*ḍarīḥ*) of *imām* al-Shāfiʿī and *imām* al-Layth b. Saʿd—may God be pleased with both of them. On this day, he gave a considerable sum as alms. The sultan was very depressed because of the Ottoman[s] and the Safawid[s].[202]

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197   On the connection between such visits and Sufism, see Taylor, *Vicinity* 14, 63, 65, 81–4, 89, 224–5; Trimingham, *Orders* 26, 179–80; Ohtoshi, Reflected, esp. 300. On *baraka* in this context, see Taylor, *Vicinity* 47–56, 129, 213, 219–21.

198   On *ziyāra* in Mamluk Syria, see Meri, *Cult*.

199   For accounts not quoted here, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 133, 168–9, 253.

200   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 126. See also Petry, *Twilight* 159.

201   Corresponding to 12 July 1514.

202   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 382. See also Schimmel, Sufismus 282–3; Schimmel, Glimpses 375; Petry, *Twilight* 206.

The sultan's final visit took place directly before the departure of the Mam-luk army to Syria in 922/1516:

> On Friday, the 14th of Rabīʿ II,[203] the sultan went down from the citadel, proceeded to al-Qarāfa, and visited the grave of *imām* al-Shāfiʿī and *imām* al-Layth—may God be pleased with both of them. His son, the chief master of the stables, accompanied him. It was said that on this day he gave a large sum as alms.[204]

From these reports, a clear pattern emerges regarding the timing of the sultan's visits, their destination, and the actions undertaken at the graves. Evidently, the sultan and his attendants performed *ziyāra*s in times of crisis, as when an important member of the court passed away, when matters of foreign policy were unclear, or prior to impending military conflicts. Furthermore, the sultan seems to have preferred Thursdays and Fridays for his *ziyāra*s, as was recommended practice.[205]

While not stated explicitly, it seems plausible that the sultan and those around him visited graves primarily to make *duʿāʾ* (supplication) there, to ask for God's help in troubled times. As Taylor notes, offering *duʿāʾ* was common in these places, which were known to be especially effective places in terms of communication with the world of the unseen:

> As known repositories of baraka, the tombs of the awliyāʾ [...] indicated special places where prayers of supplication might be offered with particular effectiveness. [...] [T]he graves of the saints attracted an endless stream of visitors hoping that their duʿāʾ might be accepted by God through the agency of the saints.[206]

We may assume that al-Ghawrī joined this "endless stream of visitors" making supplications at the burial sites of venerated persons. The tombs of al-Shāfiʿī, the eponym of the law school of the same name for whom an impressive mausoleum had been erected under the Ayyubids, and of al-Layth b. Saʿd (d. 175/791), an early jurist and historian, were considered among the most powerful and sought-after Egyptian repositories of *baraka*.[207] In his famous

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203   Corresponding to 17 May 1516.
204   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 38. See also Schimmel, Glimpses 375.
205   Taylor, *Vicinity* 71.
206   Taylor, *Vicinity* 52. See also Taylor, *Vicinity* 53, 73–5, 220–2.
207   Taylor, *Vicinity* 27–30, 49–50. See also Abdulfattah, Relics 85; Schimmel, Sufismus 282;

topographical history of Cairo, Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī deals with both tombs in considerable detail, singling them out as particularly prominent sites for *ziyāra*.[208]

When understood as courtly events, we can analyze the communicative meaning of al-Ghawrī's visits to the graves of al-Shāfiʿī and al-Layth b. Saʿd. Such an analysis, however, must differentiate between two trajectories of communication: one intramundane and one that transcends the human sphere and is directed toward the divine, while possibly also having worldly implications. The practice of *ziyāra* rested on a religious paradigm which held that communication between the human and the divine sphere was possible. If we are right in assuming that al-Ghawrī visited al-Qarāfa primarily for the purpose of *duʿāʾ*, we can conclude that the sultan used the special religious space of the cemetery to ask for God's help in his personal needs and that of the realm. While we cannot know al-Ghawrī's personal religious motives for engaging in this ceremonial form of supplication, it is clear that it had an impact and was relevant to his contemporaries, as is shown by Ibn Iyās' meticulous recording of the sultan's visits to al-Qarāfa. To observers such as Ibn Iyās, the sultan demonstrated through his actions not only his personal piety, but also his efforts to protect the sultanate against harm by sparing himself no effort in beseeching God for help.

Moreover, by engaging in the practice of *ziyāra*, the sultan also increased the religious legitimacy of his rule by acquiring blessings. As seen above, *baraka* was perceived by Muslims of the late middle period as transferable through contact. Thus, the sultan could hope to improve his religious status by means of physical proximity to venerated persons such as al-Shāfiʿī and al-Layth b. Saʿd. At the same time, through his visits the sultan performatively acknowledged and reaffirmed local forms of piety current among the population of Cairo, forms that had been criticized by members of the scholarly elite.[209] Furthermore, by visiting the graves of al-Shāfiʿī and al-Layth b. Saʿd in particular, al-Ghawrī demonstrated that, having come to Egypt as an immigrant, he identified with two people who not only belonged to the most venerated Muslims of Egypt, but were also understood as having a special relationship with the country. Al-Suyūṭī claimed that God had explicitly entrusted Egypt to al-Shāfiʿī and

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Mulder, *Mausoleum* 15, 20. See Mulder's study on the history of al-Shāfiʿī's tomb. Al-Ghawrī renovated a shop belonging to its endowment, cf. Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 16; and commissioned renovations at the two tombs themselves, cf. Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 456–7. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Adjustment* 248.

208   Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iv.2, 909–15.

209   On debates about *ziyāra*, see, e.g., Taylor, *Vicinity* 168–218, 222–3; Meri, *Cult* 126–40.

his followers,[210] while al-Layth b. Saʿd was widely known in the middle period as the almost proverbial "scholar of Egypt."[211] Hence, by visiting the graves of these two men, al-Ghawrī confirmed and endorsed the local and regional sacred geography of Cairo and Egypt.

The way in which al-Ghawrī performed these visits is noteworthy as well. In the case of the sultan's first visit, Ibn Iyās notes that al-Ghawrī dismounted and approached the tombs "humbly" (*bi-tawāḍuʿ*).[212] Thus, the sultan observed the expectations of proper behavior as they applied to visitors of al-Qarāfa.[213] Moreover, he also demonstrated that as a pious Muslim, he was willing to pay respect to venerated men of superior religious standing.

Finally, the sultan also used his visits to al-Qarāfa for ceremonial displays of generosity and largesse, by distributing alms to the needy. He thus exchanged economic for social capital and, according to contemporaneous interpretations, for religious merit. While the giving of alms was a typical activity of high-ranking visitors of graves,[214] the sultan seems to have handed out unusually large sums of money, given that even Ibn Iyās, usually quick to criticize what he perceived as al-Ghawrī's stinginess, recorded that the sultan's alms were of considerable value.

Taken together, the sultan's visits to the graves of venerated persons constituted courtly events that primarily occurred in times of crisis. Forming part of larger regional traditions of religious communication that were shaped, inter alia, by local forms of Sufism, the practice of *ziyāra* acquired additional intra-mundane implications when performed by the Mamluk ruler.

Turning now to Sufism as a social phenomenon in the context of al-Ghawrī's court, we note that in addition to Sufis affiliated with the sultan's funeral complex,[215] members of five Sufi orders (sg. *ṭarīqa*) were particularly significant to late Mamluk court life under al-Ghawrī: the Khalwatiyya, the Aḥmadiyya, the Qādiriyya, the Burhāniyya, and the Rifāʿiyya.[216]

The importance of the Khalwatiyya is not immediately apparent from the main sources of the present study, as this *ṭarīqa* is not mentioned by name in the texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, nor does it appear prominently in the chron-

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210   Fernandes, Politics 88.
211   Merad, al-Layth b. Saʿd 711. On him, see Khoury, Al-Layth.
212   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 126.
213   Taylor, *Vicinity* 72.
214   Taylor, *Vicinity* 35, 60. See also Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 59.
215   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
216   Al-Ghawrī's meeting with ʿĀʾisha al-Bāʿūniyya (d. 922/1516) during his Syrian campaign has been studied in Homerin, Love 211, 216, 234; Homerin, Crossing 467.

icles analyzed.[217] The clearest reference to the Khalwatiyya in a text originating from al-Ghawrī's court is a somewhat enigmatic passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Al-Sharīf informs us that a certain *shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī attended the 10th *majlis* of Jumādā I 911/September–October 1505 to report a dream (*manām*) that he had had:

> **Dream:** *Shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī saw in a dream that a group of people clad in iron in Turkmen style approached and sought to rule Egypt. Then, the Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—came forth together with Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī—may God be satisfied with them—and said: "I am the bondsman of the sultan of Egypt! Go back!" Then, he said to me [that is, to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī]: "Go, talk to the sultan and tell him that he should perform *dhikr* in al-Duhaysha [Hall] in the nights in which this is customary, together with *shaykh* Tamirtāsh, *shaykh* Ṣāntabāy, and *shaykh* Shāhīn!"[218]

After this account of the dream, al-Sharīf depicts the sultan interpreting it. According to him, the iron that Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī saw symbolized military strength (*quwwa*). Moreover, the sultan also referred to a second dream in which a high-ranking *amīr* had seen al-Ghawrī, at that time still a low-ranking officer, wearing an iron neckband (*ṭawq*). This dream was interpreted as indicating that al-Ghawrī would become ruler one day.[219]

Even without this interpretative hint, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's dream was almost self-explanatory: A group of people who wore Turkmen battle gear came to Egypt to take over the country. However, the Prophet Muḥammad, together with the first four caliphs, countered their advance and forced them to retreat, as he guaranteed the security of the Egyptian ruler. Thus, having averted the impending invasion, the Prophet instructed Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī to go to the sultan and tell him that he should perform Sufi practices in a hall of the citadel, together with three *shaykh*s identified by name.

Evidently, this dream account was well-suited to boost the religious legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's rule, given that the Prophet Muḥammad himself, together with the first four caliphs, is depicted as defending al-Ghawrī against foreign enemies who might represent the Ottomans, the Safavids, or some other polity

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217   On the history of the Khalwatiyya, see Curry, *Transformation*; Martin, History 276–90; Kissling, Geschichte.

218   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 193–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79.

219   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79–80. See also Irwin, Thinking 45; as well as section 6.2.2 below.

whose military power rested on Turkic forces. This dream account strongly indicates that there was a feeling of insecurity among members of the Mamluk court and that they considered a foreign invasion a real danger.

However, according to the dream, the Mamluks could face such external challenges without fear, because God's Prophet stood on their side. The specific form of the Prophet's pledge of support must have encouraged late Mamluk audiences, given that several *ḥadīth*s considered authentic ascertained that anyone who sees the Prophet Muḥammad in a dream indeed really has seen him, as Satan was unable to take on the Prophet's form.[220] Moreover, dreams in which the Prophet appeared could be considered necessarily true in other aspects of their content as well, given that al-Bukhārī's collection included the statement attributed to the Prophet: "Whoever sees me in a dream indeed sees the truth (*al-ḥaqq*)."[221]

Thus, dreams in general and those about the Prophet in particular were among the most effective ways of affirming the legitimacy of Muslim rulers in the middle period, a topic to which we return further below.[222] While Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's dream is thus interesting for what it tells us about the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court, it is by no means uncommon. The particular significance of the dream lies in its final part, in which al-Ghawrī is advised to hold regular meetings for *dhikr*, together with *shaykh*s Tamirtāsh, Ṣāntabāy, and Shāhīn. Unfortunately, the biography of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, as the one who had the dream, does little to help us understand the background of this statement. We only know about him that he evidently participated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in 911/1505 and was still alive in 928/1522, when he served as personal *imām* for a high-ranking military figure in the Ottoman administration of Egypt and organized a distribution of alms on behalf of the Ottoman governor.[223] Moreover, it has not been possible to locate any information on the *shaykh* Ṣāntabāy that al-Maḥallī referred to in his dream report.[224]

We have more information on the other two *shaykh*s al-Maḥallī named. *Shaykh* Tamirtāsh can be safely identified with *shaykh* Damirdāsh al-Muḥammadī, who was born around 858/1454 in Tabrīz or its surroundings, where he received a religious education at the hand of a Naqshbandī Sufi *shaykh*. At age sixteen, he was taken prisoner and brought to Egypt, where Sultan Qāytbāy

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220 Cf., e.g., Ibn Māja, *Sunan, Kitāb Taʿbīr al-ruʾya*, no. 3900. On dreams of the Prophet, see also Berkey, *Preaching* 81–6.

221 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Taʿbīr*, no. 6996. See also Frenkel, Accounts 206.

222 See section 6.2.2 below.

223 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 474.

224 Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 26, likewise could not identify this person.

bought him as a *mamlūk* and employed him in an administrative capacity. As a *mamlūk*, Tamirtāsh continued his religious education and acquired a reputation as a pious ascetic. Later in his life, Tamirtāsh traveled back to Tabrīz, where he was formally initiated into the Khalwaytiyya order by *shaykh* ʿUmar al-Rūshānī (d. 892/1487). Thereafter, the *shaykh* sent Tamirtāsh as his legatee back to Cairo, where Tamirtāsh took quarters in an endowed *zāwiya*.[225] The *shaykh* used the support of key members of the Mamluk military elite to establish, in Egypt, a sub-*ṭarīqa* of the Khalwatiyya known as the Damirdāshiyya, which is still active today. Tamirtāsh lived long enough to witness the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and died around 938/1532.[226]

The biography of the second identifiable *shaykh* named Shāhīn al-Muḥammadī is remarkably similar to that of Tamirtāsh. Likewise a *mamlūk* of Qāytbāy, he also left Egypt to "serve his Lord."[227] Traveling to the area of Tabrīz, like Tamirtāsh, he was also initiated into the Khalwatiyya at the hand of *shaykh* ʿUmar al-Rūshānī and thereafter returned to Egypt. There, on the Muqaṭṭam Hill, he built a place of worship where he led an ascetic life. Visitors continued to frequent his place of residence until he died in 954/1547–8.[228]

As adherents of the Khalwatiyya order, Tamirtāsh and Shāhīn were instrumental in the spread of this comparatively new order in late Mamluk Egypt.[229] Its origins can be traced back to Sufi activities in today's Azerbaijan and neighboring regions in the late eighth/fourteenth and early ninth/fifteenth centuries. The Khalwatiyya's most important early head seems to have been Yaḥyā al-Shirwānī (d. 869/1464), the master of the above-mentioned *shaykh* ʿUmar al-Rūshānī. Especially under Bāyezīd II and his indirect successors Süleymān and Selīm II, the order spread rapidly within the Ottoman domains, where, over time, it became one of the most well-known and ramified of all *ṭarīqa*s.[230] The doctrine of the Khalwatiyya and its followers—including *shaykh*s Tamir-

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225 On *zāwiya*s in Cairo in general, see Fernandes, Zāwiya; Fernandes, *Evolution* 13–6; and on Tamirtāsh's *zāwiya*, see Behrens-Abouseif, Monument 107–15; Martin, History 292–3.

226 Bannerth, Stifter 117–9. See also al-Sharʿānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 261–2; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 195–6; Bannerth, Khalwatiyya 2–7; Chih, Cheminements 184–5; Behrens-Abouseif, Monument 105–7; Behrens-Abouseif, *Adjustment* 97; Martin, History 290–2; Waugh, Silence 53–4; Waugh, *Visionaries*, esp. 26–31; Curry, *Transformation* 64; Emre, *Gulshani* 96–7.

227 Al-Sharʿānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 324.

228 Al-Sharʿānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 324–5. Death date quoted from Winter, *Society* 105. See also al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 149; Martin, History 290–1; Curry, *Transformation* 64; Emre, *Gulshani* 89–90; Waugh, *Visionaries* 26–7; Behrens-Abouseif, *Adjustment* 97.

229 On the order in Egypt, see, e.g., Martin, History 290–305; Winter, *Society* 105–12; Bannerth, Khalwatiyya; Chih, Cheminements; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 213–5; Winter, Ottoman Conquest and Egyptian Culture 297.

230 De Jong, Khalwatiyya 991–2.

tāsh and Shāhīn[231]—was heavily influenced by the writings of the great Sufi master Ibn al-ʿArabī.[232] Moreover, in Egypt, the works of Ibn al-Fāriḍ were important reference texts for Khalwatīs.[233] The most salient feature of the order was its focus on extended retreats, for periods of three to forty days, during which adepts had limited contact with the outside world, to the extent possible.[234] This practice, called *khalwa* in Arabic, gave the order its name[235] and is observed in Egypt up to the present day.[236] Communal *dhikr* is a second mainstay of the order's religious practice.[237] Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's dream evidently points to this aspect of Khalwatī religious life.

Because of its region of origin and that of its most important leaders, the inhabitants of Egypt saw the Khalwatiyya throughout the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods as a foreign, primarily Turkic and Persian order.[238] Many of its followers belonged to the Mamluk and Ottoman military forces and were of Turkic origin.[239] This applies to Shāhīn and Tamirtāsh as well as to the Sufi poet Ibrāhīm Kulshanī (d. 940/1533–4), who likewise came to Egypt as a follower of ʿUmar al-Rūshānī. Fleeing from the political upheavals caused by the rise of the Safawids, he settled in Cairo and spread his version of the teachings of the Khalwatiyya there.[240] Kulshanī, who, like the sultan, wrote multilingual religious poetry,[241] at least for some time enjoyed the personal favor of al-Ghawrī,[242] who provided him with a residence in the al-Muʾayyad

231   Bannerth, Stifter 116, 119, 123; al-Sharʿānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 262. See also Winter, *Society* 105.

232   De Jong, Khalwatiyya 992. See also Bannerth, Khalwatiyya 2; Emre, *Gulshani* 21–3, 27.

233   Winter, *Society* 105.

234   De Jong, Khalwatiyya 992. See also Winter, *Society* 106–9; Behrens-Abouseif, Monument 108–9.

235   Chih, Cheminements 182.

236   Bannerth, Stifter 122–31. See also Waugh, Silence.

237   De Jong, Khalwatiyya 992.

238   Winter, *Society* 111. See also Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 253; Bannerth, Khalwatiyya 2; Chih, Cheminements 183, 185.

239   Winter, *Society* 105. See also Emre, Banishment 206, 210.

240   Yazici, Gulshanī 1136. On him and his time in Cairo, see also al-Sharʿānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 262; Bannerth, Khalwatiyya 2–3; Chih, Cheminements 184–5; Martin, History 295–7; Emre, Banishment; Emre, *Gulshani*, esp. 75–133; Behrens-Abouseif, *Adjustment* 95–7. On his *takkiya*, see Fernandes, Variations 106–10; Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 24; Curry, *Transformation* 62–5.

241   Yazici, Gulshanī 1136–7. See also Emre, Crafting 50–1; Emre, Banishment 206; Emre, *Gulshani* 76, 85–6, 106–7, 111.

242   On their relationship, see Emre, Banishment 206–11; Emre, *Gulshani* 88–9, 92–3, 97, 100–21. For material suggesting that Kulshanī might have attended al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see Emre, *Gulshani* 108–11.

Mosque.[243] Moreover, the Ottoman Turkish hagiographical biography of Ibrā-hīm Kulshanī written by his descendant Muḥyī-yi Gülşenī (d. 1014/1605–6) speaks at length about the close relationship between Kulshanī and al-Ghawrī and about the many favors the sultan bestowed on him.[244]

Whether al-Ghawrī rendered any tangible support to Shāhīn and Tamirtāsh as well is difficult to determine, although Tamirtāsh's biographer Ernst Bannerth notes that the *shaykh* entertained an "intimate friendship"[245] with the sultan. At any rate, the observation that Shāhīn and Tamirtāsh appear, together with the unidentified *shaykh* Ṣāntabāy, as the only living spiritual authorities to be mentioned in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* underlines the signi-ficance of the new Khalwatiyya order to members of al-Ghawrī's court society. Contrary to the recent characterization of Shāhīn and Tamirtāsh as having "no ambitions beyond the reach of their lodges,"[246] in our sources they appear as the local Sufi authorities most closely connected to the inner circles of al-Ghawrī's court. The fact that these men had been military slaves themselves, were of Turco-Persianate background, and engaged in intellectual and religious pursuits similar to those of the sultan must have made them almost natural conversation partners for members of al-Ghawrī's court society. Although we do not know whether the *dhikr* that al-Maḥallī's dream referred to was ever conducted in the sultan's presence, it is understandable that al-Ghawrī's court entertained close relations with the Khalwatiyya order, whose members were similar to the sultan in their ethnic, social, and intellectual profile. Hence, it is not clear why a recent study assumes that "dynamic relationships between members of competing Sufi networks and courtly/military elites" did not exist in the late Mamluk period, "especially as this concerns Mamluk relations with Egypt-based foreign Ḥalvetī offshoots."[247] Rather, late Mamluk court circles seem to have been very much interested in the various Egyptian Khalwatiyya branches. By forming relations with them, al-Ghawrī's court was well integ-rated into transregional communication networks that connected Cairo with faraway places such as Tabrīz and contributed to a steady exchange of ideas—and in this case, Sufi affiliations—across the Islamicate world.

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243   Martin, History 296. See also Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 214; Emre, Banishment 206; Emre, *Gulshani* 106, 111–2; Behrens-Abouseif, *Adjustment* 95–6.

244   Gülşenī, *Menāqib* 315, 318–36. When using this work as historical source, one must keep in mind its specific character, genre, and comparatively late date of composition. On it, see also Curry, *Transformation* 63; Emre, Crafting 36–7; Emre, *Gulshani* 2–3, 15–23, 29–32.

245   Bannerth, Stifter 120.

246   Emre, *Gulshani* 97.

247   Emre, *Gulshani* 103 (both quotations).

It is telling, however, that we do not find Khalwatī participants in courtly events that took place in front of larger audiences. Here, members of two of the larger orders of late Mamluk Egypt, the Rifāʿiyya and the Aḥmadiyya, clearly predominated. Both orders were, as far as we know, numerically among the most important *ṭarīqa*s of the late Mamluk period. Regarding the Aḥmadiyya, Éric Geoffroy writes:

> Fondée par Aḥmad al-Badawī (m. 675/1276), c'est la voie égyptienne majeure, car la plus en enracinée dans le terroir égyptien et la plus populaire: pour le peuple comme pour les gouvernants, Sīdī Aḥmad est considéré comme le saint patron de l'Égypte, et son *mawlid* à Tanta attire plus de monde que celui du Prophète au Caire.[248]

In light of the particular prominence of this order and especially of the great role that the celebration of the *mawlid* of its founder had on the religious life of Egypt in the late middle period,[249] it is almost surprising that this order played only a minor role in late Mamluk court life under al-Ghawrī. In particular, we do not know of a single instance in which the sultan took part in the celebration of Aḥmad al-Badawī's *mawlid* or observed this day at court.[250] Rather, there is only one well-documented courtly event in which representatives of the Aḥmadiyya figured prominently. When al-Ghawrī marched with the Mamluk army to Syria, he not only took the head of the order, the *khalīfat al-Badawī* with him—though against the latter's wish[251]—but also made sure that the population of Cairo knew that the Sufi *shaykh* accompanied al-Ghawrī. To this end, the Sufi *shaykh* was ordered to join the ruler's parade together with the red banners of his order. These banners were later raised over the battlefield of Marj Dābiq, where the Sufi *shaykh* had accompanied the sultan.[252]

Why did al-Ghawrī and those around him not engage more closely with this famous and widespread order during most of the sultan's reign? And why did al-Ghawrī nevertheless take the head of this order with him to Syria? While it

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248   Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 205. See also Schimmel, Sufismus 276–7.

249   On this order in premodern Egypt, see, e.g., Winter, *Society* 93–101; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 205–6.

250   On Qāytbāy's much closer connection with the order, see Schimmel, Sufismus 277. Petry, *Twilight* 155, states that al-Ghawrī "lavishly observed" the *mawlid* of the saint in 913/1507. Petry's source, however, does not corroborate the sultan's direct involvement.

251   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 35.

252   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 43, 69–70. On these passages, see also Schimmel, Sufismus 285; Schimmel, Glimpses 378; Petry, *Twilight* 217–8, 225–6; and on the Sufis accompanying al-Ghawrī, see Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 54.

seems impossible to provide definite answers to these questions, the particular character of this order might help us to understand the sultan's decision. As noted, al-Ghawrī tried to communicate to his subjects an image of himself as a pious and generous, but also as a refined and sophisticated Muslim believer who was interested in the minute details of religious doctrine and expressed his devotion to God and the Prophet Muḥammad in multilingual poetry. However, the Aḥmadiyya was not known for intellectual sophistication and refinement. Michael Winter noted that "the Aḥmadiyya did not produce writers and teachers" and was "culturally inferior"[253] when compared with other *ṭarīqa*s. Hence, a closer affiliation with this order would have been contrary to the image of himself that al-Ghawrī strived to display to the population of the realm. Moreover, we may assume that the sultan did not feel personally attracted to an order whose vision of Islam was so different from his own.

Yet, the Aḥmadiyya was immensely popular among the people of Egypt and, to quote Winter again, it was "more influential socially"[254] than other *ṭarīqa*s, as it "had a greater number of followers, centers, and branches than other orders."[255] Thus, it makes sense that when the sultan was striving to muster general support for his campaign against the Ottomans, he sought to obtain—and openly displayed—the support of a widespread and influential *ṭarīqa* such as the Aḥmadiyya rather than that of the Khalwatiyya, a small order popular mainly among immigrants.[256]

To a certain extent, the roles of two other relevant major orders, the Rifāʿiyya, named after its founder Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī (d. 578/1182),[257] and the Qādiriyya, which owes its name to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166),[258] resembled the role of the Aḥmadiyya in late Mamluk court life under al-Ghawrī. Like the latter *ṭarīqa*, the Rifāʿiyya was one of the most widespread and popular orders in late Mamluk and early Ottoman Egypt.[259] The fact that al-Ghawrī had the head of this order accompany him to Marj Dābiq, together with descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad who were members of the Qādiriyya,[260] supports our assumption that the sultan selected his Sufi travel companions primarily based on the impact their presence would have on the inhabitants of the sultanate.

253   Winter, *Society* 100 (both quotations). See also Winter, Sufism 147–8.
254   Winter, *Society* 100.
255   Winter, *Egyptian Society* 135.
256   See also Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 123; Winter, *Egyptian Society* 135.
257   On this order in premodern Egypt, see, e.g., Winter, *Society* 102–3; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 210–1, 223–4.
258   On this order in premodern Egypt, see, e.g., Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 225–6.
259   Winter, *Society* 102. On the Rifāʿiyya in Egypt, see Bannerth, La Rifāʿiyya.
260   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 35, 43, 69–70.

However, the sultan was apparently connected to members of the Rifāʿiyya on another level, too. In the account of the celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet at the Cairo Citadel discussed above,[261] al-Sharīf referred to the Sufis whom al-Ghawrī joined in their religious dancing as "*awlād al-rifāʿ*."[262] Given that a literal translation of this expression as "the children of taking away" would not make any sense in the present context, the only plausible interpretation is that it denotes members of the Rifāʿiyya order, who appear here as the "children" of the founder of their order.[263] Thus, al-Ghawrī apparently joined in a *samāʿ* of the Rifāʿiyya at the end of the *mawlid* celebration. This step turned him—at least temporarily—in a ritual manner into a Sufi of this *ṭarīqa*. It is difficult to know why the sultan chose the Rifāʿiyya order for this purpose. Apart from the fact that the death date of its founder appears in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*,[264] we have no evidence that this order enjoyed a special status among the members of al-Ghawrī's court society. Possibly, the fact that the heads of the Rifāʿiyya were tied by marriage to the former Ayyubid rulers of Egypt made this *ṭarīqa* attractive to al-Ghawrī as the one most befitting a sultan.[265]

The Burhāniyya, which traces its history back to the Egyptian Sufi Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 969/1296) is the last order to figure prominently at least once in our sources on al-Ghawrī's reign.[266] It appears in the context of a very rare occurrence, namely a courtly event not organized by the sultan or on his behalf:

> On Saturday, the ninth [of Muḥarram 918][267] the barber al-Raʾīs Kamāl al-Dīn b. Shams came up [to the citadel] and called on the sultan. It was mentioned before that [the sultan] had withdrawn his favor from him and had forbidden him to come up to the citadel. Kamāl al-Dīn then concealed himself for some time and nothing was heard about him. Then, he came up [to the citadel] on that day, together with Sufis from the tomb of Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī—may God be satisfied with him—who were performing *dhikr* and had with them [their] banners and copies of the Quran. They entered the *ḥawsh* while the sultan was reviewing *mamlūk* recruits on that day and providing them with their rations, as was custom-

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261   See section 5.1.1.2 above.

262   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 130; (ed. ʿAzzām) 50.

263   Why al-Sharīf referred to the founder of the Rifāʿiyya as "al-Rifāʿ" remains unclear.

264   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 36ʳ.

265   Cf. Bosworth, Rifāʿiyya 525.

266   On this order in premodern Egypt, see, e.g., Winter, *Society* 102–3; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 207.

267   Corresponding to 27 March 1512.

ary. He was very ill-tempered on that day. When these Sufis came to him behaving like this, he became even more ill-tempered. When they stood in front of [the sultan], he saw Kamāl al-Dīn b. Shams who was wearing a white woolen pilgrimage garment and a *ṭaylasān*[268] whose ends were stuck into his turban, and when [the sultan] saw this stream of Sufis who accompanied him and their multitude, he turned toward Kamāl al-Dīn b. Shams, scolded him with words and abuse, insulted him with obscenities, and said to him: "Did I not tell you not to show me your face anymore or I would make sure you fare badly and confiscate your belongings?" […] Then the sultan gave orders to hand him over to the *wālī* for punishment. On the second day, rumors spread among the people that the sultan had sent Kamāl al-Dīn to the al-Maqshara [Prison].[269]

Moreover, Ibn Iyās informs us that previously, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Shams (date of death unknown) had been among the sultan's *khawāṣṣ* and had served as the ruler's personal masseur. In this capacity, he had administered medical treatment to the sultan in the form of multiple venesections in the ruler's genital area. According to Ibn Iyās, however, Kamāl al-Dīn had fallen from al-Ghawrī's favor when the sultan learned that his masseur had told *amīr*s and other people that the sultan had suffered from a scrotal hernia (*qīlīṭ*).[270]

Kamāl al-Dīn's fall from al-Ghawrī's grace is a particularly strong illustration of the fact that proximity to the ruler was not only a valuable asset, but also a possible risk. However, in the present context, Kamāl al-Dīn's attempt to regain the sultan's favor deserves particular attention. To this end, the sultan's former masseur had organized an event with religious connotations. This event focused on al-Ghawrī in his capacity as ruler—and thus constituted a courtly event in this sense defined above[271]—, but was not organized or arranged by the sultan.

The basic communicative intent of the event Kamāl al-Dīn staged was obvious: The masseur tried to gain the sultan's forgiveness and possibly to regain his favor. To do so, he enlisted the support of a group of Burhānī Sufis who not only accompanied him on his surprise visit to the citadel, but also highlighted their special religious status by performing *dhikr* during their march to the citadel

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268 On this headwear, see Kindinger, Garment.

269 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 254. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 90, and on the quoted passage, see Schimmel, Sufismus 278; Schimmel, Glimpses 373. For a fuller analysis of the passage, see Mauder, Barbier.

270 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 254.

271 Cf. section 1.2.3 above.

and by bringing the banners of their order and their Quran copies with them. This event was part of what Richard McGregor referred to as the Sufi "tradition of parading."[272] McGregor sees such Sufi parades as a "simulation" of the military parades that were staged by the Mamluk sultan and high-ranking *amīr*s. McGregor writes: "[A]lthough these processions resembled a military model, they were in fact simulacra or simulations, conceptually distinct and thus nonrivalrous."[273] For McGregor, Sufi parades had an autonomy of their own and did not represent "competing claims to a single contested authority"[274] relative to military parades. McGregor understands Sufi parades as expressions of a form of agency that was related to, but not diametrically opposed to that of the ruling military elite:[275] "[R]ecognizing the agency of our Sufi parades does not take away from Mamluk power or agency, rather together they constitute the single regime of power in which they are both anchored."[276]

Building on McGregor's insights, we can interpret Kamāl al-Dīn's actions here as an attempt to build on Sufi agency after he had lost his direct access to the sultan, the most obvious center of political agency. By having the Sufis come to the citadel in their full ceremonial gear—with the banners and Quran copies taking the place of the standards and weapons of a military parade—Kamāl al-Dīn made sure that the religious significance of the parade was not lost on anyone. Moreover, he highlighted his own role by donning a white woolen pilgrimage garment (*iḥrām*) that not only further emphasized the religious symbolism of the event, but also indicated that Kamāl al-Dīn sought reconciliation with the sultan, as a person wearing the *iḥrām* during the pilgrimage was legally obliged to refrain from any kind of argument or quarrel.[277]

Kamāl al-Dīn's attempt to build on the Burhānī Sufis' support to regain the sultan's favor, however, failed utterly. Possibly, Kamāl al-Dīn's endeavor to establish a second locus of agency and to force the sultan to participate in a courtly event that the ruler had not arranged is what particularly enraged al-Ghawrī. By using the presence of the Sufis to buttress his position, Kamāl al-Dīn left the sultan with only two choices: He could pardon his former masseur, or act on his former threat and punish Kamāl al-Dīn for entering his presence in violation of earlier orders. But, by pardoning Kamāl al-Dīn, al-Ghawrī would have

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272   McGregor, Sufis 219.
273   McGregor, Sufis 220.
274   McGregor, Sufis 220.
275   McGregor, Sufis 221.
276   McGregor, Sufis 221. On Sufi parades, see also Hofer, *Popularisation* 94–6; McGregor, Networks 318–9.
277   Wensinck and Jomier, Iḥrām 1053.

undermined his own supreme position as sultan and demonstrated to his court society that he was susceptible to blackmail, provided one used the right—in this case religious—trigger to appeal to the sultan's piety. The sultan could not allow this to happen if he wanted to maintain his position. Hence, he had to punish Kamāl al-Dīn. Ironically, Kamāl al-Dīn probably would have had a better chance to gain the sultan's pardon if he had met with him in a more secluded context and had not forced the sultan to participate in an unscheduled and unwanted courtly event. Therefore we must agree with Ibn Iyās' conclusion regarding Kamāl al-Dīn: "It would have been more proper if he had never visited [al-Ghawrī]."[278]

Taken together, our review of the role of Sufism at al-Ghawrī's court shows that members of Sufi orders could, at least at times, play a key role in the sultan's court society, be it as the ruler's clients or as useful participants in his courtly events. Moreover, al-Ghawrī and at least some of those around him were interested in Sufi literature and thought, as several texts originating from the context of his court show. However, Sufi religious practices, apart from the visiting of graves, seem to have been less central to religious life at the Mamluk court—at least according to the information we find in our sources. This result is somewhat surprising, in light of the significance of Sufism as a social and intellectual phenomenon at al-Ghawrī's court. Indeed, it might be the result of a bias of our most important sources, which focus either—in the case of our *majālis* texts—primarily on the people around the sultan and their intellectual concerns, or—in the case of Ibn Iyās' chronicle and similar texts—on those aspects of Mamluk court life that were observable to people outside the sultan's court society. Hence, it is possible that religious activities that did not address scholarly questions and did not take place before larger audiences, such as, for example, an individual's performance of *dhikr*, went unnoticed in our sources.

5.1.3   *Shiʿis and Members of Other Religious Groups at al-Ghawrī's Court*

In his biography of al-Ghawrī, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī accuses the penultimate Mamluk sultan of having harbored "a secret love for Shāh Ismāʿīl,"[279] the protagonist of the "disgusting sect of the Shiʿa."[280] Hitherto, historians paid little attention to the highly unusual notion that as a Mamluk ruler, al-Ghawrī secretly entertained pro-Shiʿi leanings or was sympathetic to the religious views of his

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278   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 254.

279   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 49.

280   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 51.

Shiʿi rival, Ismāʿīl. The only noteworthy exception is Carl Petry's *Protectors or Praetorians?* which argued that al-Ghawrī did not see any "chance of Shīʿism corroding the spiritual integrity of his realm"[281] and therefore exhibited "indifference to Ismāʿīl's doctrinal deviance."[282]

Both Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's view of al-Ghawrī as a clandestine Shiʿi sympathizer and the assumption of his religious indifference in *Protectors or Praetorians?* stand in contrast to the established knowledge about the Mamluk political elite. Notwithstanding the absence of a detailed study of Shiʿism under the Mamluks,[283] earlier scholarship in particular often opined that a strong identification with Sunnism and a hostile attitude toward Shiʿis—or, as they probably would have referred to them, *rawāfiḍ*[284]—were central elements of the self-image of members of the Mamluk ruling elite. According to Ulrich Haarmann, "[b]oth the Mamlūk governing caste, and the religious leaders […] declared the battle against the *rawāfiḍ* the prime duty of all those responsible in the state."[285] Similarly, Éric Geoffroy refers to the shared Sunni—and by implication anti-Shiʿi—identity of most of the population of the sultanate as an "element of unity"[286] and shows how religious and political officials cooperated in executing Shiʿis who had insulted Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.[287]

An examination of the pertinent sources from al-Ghawrī's court indicates that none of these three available models of interpretation—Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's notion of al-Ghawrī's "secret love" for the Shiʿi Ismāʿīl, Petry's model of "indifference," and Haarmann's and Geoffroy's postulation of an anti-Shiʿi stance of the ruling elite—do justice to the complexity of religious life under al-Ghawrī. Rather, the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and other texts from his court indicate that the sultan and those around him combined a clear commitment to Sunni views in questions of theology, law, history, and other pertinent areas with special respect and affection for central figures of Shiʿism, such as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants. This religious outlook exhibits remarkable similarities to religious currents in Persianate regions of the Islamicate ecumene—

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281   Petry, *Protectors* 50.

282   Petry, *Protectors* 50.

283   The most substantial study is Winter, Shams. Moreover, see also Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 63–6; McGregor, Networks 317–8; Clifford, Observations 249–50; Omar, *Apostasy*, esp. 248–81.

284   On this derogatory term for Shiʿism in Mamluk times, see Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 63–5.

285   Haarmann, Miṣr 169. See also van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 66.

286   Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 63.

287   Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 64–5. See also Clifford, Observations 272–3. On Shiʿis accused of insulting Companions in Mamluk times, see also Wiederhold, Blasphemy 47–9, 64–9; Levanoni, Egypt 160–2, 166–7, 179–80; Winter, Shams 167–71, 175.

currents referred to as "confessional ambiguity,"[288] "confessional fluidity,"[289] "'Alid loyalism,"[290] "imamophilism,"[291] and *tashayyuʿ ḥasan*.[292] In what follows, we first examine source material from al-Ghawrī's court that bears witness to the special status accorded to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants, the so-called ʿAlids. Thereafter, we explore the limits of the court society's involvement with forms of religious thought and practice that could be interpreted as Shiʿi. Finally, we discuss ways to conceptualize late Mamluk religiosity beyond a clear-cut Shiʿi-Sunni dichotomy and contextualize our findings in the broader religious landscape of the late middle and early modern Islamicate world.

Al-Ghawrī's religious poetry offers valuable material on how the sultan viewed the ʿAlids. In one of his Ottoman Turkish poems, we read:

> Oh God, for the sake of the seal of the prophets:
> Namely, the true beloved of God, Muṣṭafā.
> […]
> For the sake […] of the two bright pearls, one of which is Ḥasan,
> The other is Ḥusayn—for the sake of the benevolent lord of Karbalā!
> […]
> Have mercy on your servant Ghawrī, grant him salvation from grief![293]

With their reference to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, who are revered by many Shiʿis as the second and third *imām*, respectively, and the mention of al-Ḥusayn's violent death at Karbalā, these lines address central elements of Shiʿi religious doctrine. Similarly, in one of his Arabic poems, the sultan praises the "people of the house" (*āl al-bayt*)[294]—a term often taken to refer to the Prophet Muḥammad's family, including the descendants of his daughter Fāṭima and her husband ʿAlī.

While the known corpus of the sultan's poetry does not include references to ʿAlids as *imām*s, that is, as holders of the position of religious and political leadership that Shiʿis typically consider an ʿAlid prerogative, other sources depict the sultan as explicitly bestowing this rank to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, at least. In an exchange narrated in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, al-Ghawrī applauds the Umayyad ruler ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99–101/717–20): "It is remarkable that within a

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288   E.g., Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 4.
289   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 4.
290   E.g., Hodgson, *Venture* ii, 38, 283, 446.
291   E.g., Melvin-Koushki, *Quest* 73.
292   E.g., Momen, *Introduction* 96.
293   Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 67–8, 117–8, trans. Yalçın (slightly modified).
294   Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 138.

short period [that is, his reign of only three years], he put an end to many vile acts, including the cursing of *imām* ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him."[295] Here, al-Ghawrī refers to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib not only as *imām*, but he also endorses ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's actions against an Umayyad practice that was particularly detested among Shiʿis.[296] In a second instance, the sultan likewise uses the title *imām* for ʿAlī when he states that the latter, because of his status as friend of God (*walī*), could perform miracles that equaled, in outward appearance, those of prophets.[297] This suggests that al-Ghawrī viewed Muḥammad's son-in-law not only as *imām*, but also as enjoying a special relationship with God, one that brought him close to the rank of prophethood.

Elsewhere in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, ʿAlī likewise bears the title of *imām*[298] and is presented as pious,[299] generous,[300] battle-tested,[301] and especially well-informed about the universe[302] and the proper administration of justice;[303] thus, the most important qualities of a perfect Muslim ruler were combined in him. With regard to his descendants, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* cites with approval an anecdote defending the status of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn as "offspring of the Messenger of God."[304] Al-Ḥusayn's preordained death is shown as causing great grief to the Prophet, who therefore shunned Muʿāwiya (r. 41–60/661–80),[305] the father of Yazīd (r. 60–4/680–3) who is repeatedly cursed in the text for his role in the killing of al-Ḥusayn and is said to have died in agony from an incurable illness sent by God as punishment.[306]

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya also displays a special interest in later ʿAlids, especially the Twelver Shiʿi *imām*s after al-Ḥusayn. The death dates of four of them are listed in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. As discussed above,[307] the text offers this kind of information only for the most prominent members of the Muslim community, such as caliphs, sultans, or eponyms of *madhhab*s.[308]

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295   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 79ᵛ.
296   Afsaruddin, *Muslims* 92. See also Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 76ᵛ.
297   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, 6ᵛ.
298   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 5ᵛ; ii, fol. 2ʳ.
299   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 63ᵛ.
300   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 63ʳ.
301   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 62ᵛ–63ᵛ.
302   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 5ᵛ.
303   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 47ʳ.
304   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 73ᵛ–74ʳ.
305   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 67ʳ–67ᵛ.
306   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 68ᵛ–70ᵛ.
307   See section 3.1.3.2 above.
308   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ʳ, 109ʳ; ii, fols. 13ʳ, 14ᵛ.

Our two other main sources feature similar material. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* depicts the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as participating in the centuries-old debate about the relative merit of ʿAlī vis-à-vis the other early caliphs. Al-Ghawrī's favorite, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, is quoted with the view that ʿAlī's rank in paradise is more exalted than that of the other early caliphs, including Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, because of ʿAlī's marriage to the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima.[309] This view was atypical among Sunni scholars, most of whom taught that the order of the caliphs' tenures reflected their level of merit, although some accorded precedence to ʿAlī over ʿUthmān.[310] Moreover, the same work also features a debate about a *ḥadīth* transmitted among Sunni and Shiʿis stating that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the lords of the young men (*shabāb*) in paradise.[311] When al-Ghawrī inquired about the precise meaning of this tradition, he was told that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were to be the lords of all the people of paradise, since all of them would be resurrected as youths.[312] In other words, members of the Mamluk court viewed the second and the third Shiʿi *imām*s as supreme eschatological rulers.

The same *ḥadīth* also appears with the same essential interpretation in a parallel passage in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[313] Moreover, this work attributes several aphorisms about the importance of learning and proper political conduct to ʿAlī; thus, again he is presented as a paragon of wise rule.[314] It further quotes ʿAlī as saying "[Even] had the veils been removed, I would not have attained further certainty," which al-Ghawrī takes to mean that ʿAlī, with his *wilāya*, had attained all knowledge available to humans on Earth.[315] Unfortunately, the passage does not indicate how al-Ghawrī and the members of his salon understood the term *wilāya*, which could refer both to the Sufi concept of "friendship with God" and to Shiʿi teachings about the *imām*s' special authority.[316] Nevertheless, it is clear that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* portrays the sultan as granting ʿAlī a rank of quasi-omniscience. This special respect for ʿAlī's knowledge also found expression in the two textually independent, multilin-

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309   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 175; (ed. ʿAzzām) 51–2.

310   Afsaruddin, *Muslims* 55–8.

311   This *ḥadīth* is included, e.g., in al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Manāqib*, no. 4136; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Muqaddima*, no. 123.

312   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 115–6.

313   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 216–7.

314   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 47, 94, 199; (ed. ʿAzzām) 84.

315   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 71–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 24.

316   For Shiʿi teachings, see, e.g., Walker, Wilāya.

gual collections of ʿAlī's wise sayings produced for al-Ghawrī.[317] Moreover, the sultan's library is known to have contained at least three copies of what was believed to be ʿAlī's testament to his sons,[318] and at least one copy of the supplication *al-Ḥirz al-Yamānī* (The Yemeni Protection).[319] This supplication was widely used among Shiʿis and was variously attributed to ʿAlī or the sixth *imām* Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765).[320]

Taken together, this material demonstrates that al-Ghawrī and members of his court repeatedly expressed their respect, affection, and admiration for those ʿAlids whom Twelver Shiʿis regarded as *imām*s. The first Shiʿi *imām* ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was especially prominent in their religious communication; he was seen as a paragon of wise and pious rulership whose special relationship with the Prophet Muḥammad and the Almighty set him apart from all other human beings and brought him close to the rank of a prophet. His sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were accorded the rank of supreme eschatological rulers, and their descendants in the line recognized by Twelver Shiʿis belonged to the most prominent members of the Muslim community throughout time.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that permanent members of the court understood themselves as Shiʿis, embraced a Shiʿi understanding of history, or participated in Shiʿi traditions of learning. The very same poem by al-Ghawrī, quoted above for its praise of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, includes the line "For the sake of Abū Bakr, who was the friend and Companion of the Prophet."[321] This kind of praise for Abū Bakr, whom Sunnis regard as the first caliph, but whom many Shiʿis view very negatively, as the person who prevented the first *imām* ʿAlī from assuming his, as they see it, prophetically sanctioned position as leader of the *umma*, seems irreconcilable with a Shiʿi religious identity.

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317 See section 3.3.2 above. On these sayings in contemporaneous Ottoman court culture, see Qutbuddin, Books 607–9, 616, 623.

318 MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 176 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 709–10); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 177 (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 710; Flemming, Activities 258); MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 398, fols. 7ᵛ–18ʳ [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 414).

319 MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 82, fols. 1ᵛ–20ʳ [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 331). On the text and its author, see Brockelmann, *Geschichte* Suppl. ii, 841. It is unclear whether the supplication attributed to ʿAlī and included in MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 398, fols. 18ᵛ–22ʳ [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iv, 414) is the same text.

320 For the attribution to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, see, e.g., Wright, *Realizing* 93; and for that to ʿAlī see, e.g., Nasr and Aminrazavi (eds.), *Anthology* v, 393, where it is called a "[c]anonical Shiʿi invocation."

321 Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 67, 117, trans. Yalçın (slightly modified).

Moreover, this reference to Abū Bakr is by no means exceptional, given that in multiple instances al-Ghawrī's poems praise the first three caliphs, all of whom were, from a Shiʿi perspective, illegitimate rulers.[322]

Similarly, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the source on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* containing the most material on ʿAlid history, presents an entirely Sunni interpretation of the events of the first decades after the Prophet Muḥammad's death.[323] It does not depict the Prophet as appointing ʿAlī as his successor, and presents ʿAlī as explicitly consenting to Abū Bakr's rule.[324] Moreover, the text interprets the military conflict between al-Ḥusayn and Yazīd as a fight between two men in love with the same woman and thus negates its religio-political significance altogether.[325] Furthermore, the fact that the work contains a death date for the twelfth Shiʿi *imām* is an outright contradiction of the Twelver Shiʿi view that he continues to live in occultation, up to the present day.[326]

In the debates about legal, theological, and other scholarly topics narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, Shiʿi traditions of learning are absent. All exchanges about *fiqh* topics take place within the boundaries defined by the four Sunni *madhhab*s and *kalām* debates typically only take into account Ashʿarī and Māturīdī, that is, Sunni views. Moreover, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* includes the Sunni position that Abraham's family was more distinguished than that of Muḥammad,[327] a position that is difficult to reconcile with the exalted status Shiʿis usually accord to Muḥammad's kin. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* ascribes verses to the sultan in which all first four caliphs are praised in roughly equal measure.[328]

These insights from the texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* align well with what we know about the sultan's court more broadly. Apart from Safawid envoys, our sources do not explicitly identify anyone attending al-Ghawrī's courtly events as Shiʿi. Above, we examined how al-Ghawrī and those around him used religious occasions to demonstrate their identification with Sunni Islam to their Shiʿi visitors.[329] We also saw that if the sultan and his court observed the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, it was as a joyful holiday, and not as a day of mourning, as would be

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322 E.g., Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 55, 57–8, 61, 63, 106, 108, 110, 113–4; al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 22ʳ. Most of these passages include praise of ʿAlī as well.

323 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 57ʳ–66ʳ.

324 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 57ᵛ–58ʳ.

325 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 66ᵛ–67ʳ.

326 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 14ᵛ.

327 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 88. The Sunni position can be traced to a tradition in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb Aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ*, no. 3370.

328 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 271; (ed. ʿAzzām) 149.

329 Cf. section 5.1.1.1 above. See also Mauder, Head.

typical for Shiʿis.[330] Finally, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī informs us that al-Ghawrī took steps to prevent the cursing of the Prophet's Companions, including Abū Bakr, thus banning a widespread Shiʿi religious practice.[331]

Our findings indicate that an oversimplified clear-cut Sunni-Shiʿi dichotomy is ill-suited to analyze the peculiarities of religious communication at al-Ghawrī's court. It seems more promising to understand religious orientations between Sunnism and Shiʿism in the late middle period as lying on a continuum.[332] Most of the religious communication at al-Ghawrī's court without doubt fell more toward the Sunni end of the continuum, yet it also encompassed expressions of respect and affection for the Shiʿi *imām*s, and these point to a more intermediate place on the continuum.

Earlier scholarship has drawn attention to similar religious attitudes among Sunni Muslims of the middle period, especially in the eastern parts of the Islamicate world. Marshall Hodgson uses the term "ʿAlid loyalism"[333] to denote a "general exaltation of ʿAlī"[334] and related "ʿAlid-loyalist ideas [that] were permeating Sunnism generally."[335] John E. Woods refers to the prevalence of "ʿAlid concepts […] even in circles nominally Sunni" with the term "confessional ambiguity."[336] Judith Pfeiffer applies both terms to the religious landscape of the Persianate world of the late middle period "during which especially the distinctions between Sunnism and Shiʿism were largely dissolved into a form of ʿAlid loyalism that makes it difficult to discern strict confessional boundaries."[337] Matthew Melvin-Koushki similarly speaks of "imamophilism"[338] and a "rampant confessional ambiguity between Sunni and Shiʿi that increasingly defined Islamic religiosity, particularly in Iran, up to the beginning of the 10th/16th century."[339] Moreover, he notes in this context the special importance of the concept of *wilāya* as used by Shiʿis and Sufis, which also appears in sources from al-Ghawrī's court and points to the prevalence of *tashayyuʿ*

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330   Cf. section 5.1.1.3 above.
331   Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 217.
332   Melvin-Koushki, *Quest* 73, speaks of an "axis" encompassing "orientations," such as "Shiʿi-Sunnism or imamophilism."
333   Hodgson, *Venture* ii, 38, 283, 446.
334   Hodgson, *Venture* ii, 38.
335   Hodgson, *Venture* ii, 284.
336   Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 4 (both quotations).
337   Pfeiffer, Ambiguity 119. For the Timurids, see Manz, *Power* 209–10; Subtelny, *Timurids* 62, 205–6; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 30, 70.
338   Melvin-Koushki, *Quest* 73.
339   Melvin-Koushki, *Quest* 69–70.

ḥasan (lit. good Shiʿism) in Iran during the ninth/fifteenth century.[340] Moojan Momen explains that this term "means extolling the virtues of ʿAlī [and his family] and condemning Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd but without going to what was considered the extreme Twelver Shiʿism and rejecting the first three caliphs and exaggerating the position of ʿAlī and the Imams."[341]

Regardless of whether the religious current in question is labeled ʿAlid loyalism, confessional ambiguity, imamophilism, or *tashayyuʿ ḥasan*, earlier scholarship described it almost exclusively as a Persianate phenomenon, and the present author is not aware of any publication applying these concepts to Mamluk Egypt. How then, can we explain the presence of similar elements in the religious communication of al-Ghawrī's Cairo-centered court society?

Research on Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria might offer an answer to this question. Among other scholars, Daniella Talmon-Heller and Konrad Hirschler showed that religious life in Ayyubid Syria entailed points of contact between Sunnis and Shiʿis, whether through shared practices of the veneration of relics[342] or the presence of Shiʿi religious literature in library collections endowed and used by Sunnis.[343] Hirschler links these observations directly to research about confessional ambiguity in the Persianate world and argues that they point to "a development towards confessional ambiguity or imamophilism, which may be comparable with that established for the eastern Islamic world."[344]

Stefan Winter characterized Mamluk-ruled Syria in the eighth/fourteenth century as a context "where the line between Sunni and Shiʿi religiosity was not yet so clearly drawn,"[345] leading to situations in which a scholar could be claimed by both Shiʿi and Sunni groups.[346] He regards Sunni ambivalence and relative Shiʿi inconspicuousness as distinctive features of Sunni-Shiʿi coexistence[347] in Mamluk Syria and argues that only with the rise of Ottoman-Safawid antagonism "in the sixteenth century did Sunnism and Shiʿism become, both in political and personal terms, definitively incompatible"[348] in Syria. In light of these findings, it seems possible that the special respect that members of al-Ghawrī's court paid to the Shiʿi *imām*s could be related to entanglements

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340   Melvin-Koushki, *Quest* 70–2.

341   Momen, *Introduction* 96.

342   Talmon-Heller, *Piety* 196–8.

343   Hirschler, *Damascus* 123–8.

344   Hirschler, *Damascus* 126.

345   Winter, Shams 165.

346   Winter, Shams 165–7.

347   Winter, Shams 181.

348   Winter, Shams 181.

between Mamluk Syria and Egypt, especially since several key members of the court, such as al-Ghawrī, Ibn al-Shiḥna, and Ibn Abī Sharīf were of Syrian origin or had served there during earlier phases of their careers.

Nevertheless, we should also not underestimate the importance of the interconnections between al-Ghawrī's court and Persianate parts of the Islamicate world which earlier scholarship identified as centers of phenomena such as confessional ambiguity or *tashayyuʿ ḥasan*. As has become abundantly clear throughout this study, members of al-Ghawrī's court were steeped in Persianate culture and learning, and the sultan himself was known for his special interest in learned men from the East.[349] Therefore, it seems plausible that their special respect for ʿAlids was another way in which the members of al-Ghawrī's court took part in intellectual and religious currents hitherto regarded as distinctly Persianate. However, unlike other Persianate characteristics of court life under al-Ghawrī, the late Mamluk tolerance for confessional ambiguity, to build on a term coined by Thomas Bauer,[350] did not continue into early modern eastern Mediterranean Islamicate court culture, which was instead shaped by the religiously charged conflicts between Ottoman Sunni and Safawid Shiʿi rulers.[351]

These conflicts might also explain Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's above quoted accusations against al-Ghawrī as entertaining "a secret love for Shāh Ismāʿīl,"[352] who belonged to the "disgusting sect of the Shiʿa."[353] The Syrian Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, who died in 971/1563, lived in a world that was polarized along confessional lines and had little in common with the Mamluk Syria marked by Sunni-Shiʿi overlap and ambivalence that Winter described. To him, the clear-cut Sunni-Shiʿi divide that dominated religious and political life in the region must have appeared as an almost natural framework of reference. In it, the pro-ʿAlid Sunnism of al-Ghawrī's court, about which he seems to have been well-informed, was an anomaly that could be explained in the portrayal of al-Ghawrī as a clandestine Shiʿi-Safawid sympathizer. Moreover, this interpretation of the Mamluk ruler as a Safawid partisan offered the valuable advantages of providing a retroactive legitimation for the Ottoman attack on what was a fellow Sunni polity and being in line with accusations found in other Ottoman sources that the Mamluks had entered into a secret alliance with the Safawids.[354] Venetian

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349   See esp. sections 3.1.1.3 and 4.1.2.3 above.

350   Bauer, *Kultur*.

351   On the religious character of these conflicts, see, e.g., recently Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 50.

352   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 49.

353   Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 51.

354   Cf., e.g., Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme* 279, 282, and section 2.1.2.3 above. On this line of argumentation to justify the Ottoman attack, see also Çıpa, *Making* 6–7; Atçıl, *Scholars* 95; Repp, *Müfti* 212–7. Petry, *Protectors* 50, seems to allude to a similar interpretation when

texts show that the Ottomans did their best to spread the notion, even out-side the Islamicate world, that al-Ghawrī had sided with the Shiʿa.[355] Given that these accusations resonate so well with this campaign, orchestrated by the Ottomans to discredit their Mamluk enemies and justify their own milit-ary undertakings,[356] modern-day scholars should be extremely cautious with regard to post-conquest sources ascribing political implications to purported secret Shiʿi leanings of the late Mamluk ruling elite. A more promising line of interpretation views the veneration of ʿAlids in late Mamluk religious court life as part of broader religious developments in the Islamicate world of the late middle period. For members of al-Ghawrī's court society, this veneration of ʿAlids apparently did not stand in conflict with their self-identification as Sun-nis.

As for members of other, non-Islamic religious groups, there is no indica-tion that any local non-Muslim ever held a significant administrative position under al-Ghawrī, participated in his *majālis*, or contributed in any other signi-ficant way to the life of the court. In short, we can describe al-Ghawrī's court society—with the exception of a few special cases such as diplomatic envoys—as consisting purely of Sunni Muslims.

Although it is difficult to make reliable quantitative statements about the religious affiliations of the population of the sultanate in the late Mamluk period,[357] we can be sure that local Jews and Christians made up a signific-ant portion of al-Ghawrī's subjects. Why, then, were they entirely absent from his court society? Possible explanations include the historical development of the administrative apparatus of the sultanate which, apparently, became increasingly Muslim over the course of Mamluk history, changes in the reli-gious composition of Egypt that over time led to a decrease in the number of its non-Muslim inhabitants, and al-Ghawrī's personal preferences. Given what we know about al-Ghawrī's strategies of political communication and the role that religion played in them, another possible explanation deserves particu-lar attention: Arabic literature of the middle period saw the proliferation of a

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referring to Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's accusations as reflecting a "judgment *post quem*" after the Ottoman conquest.

355 Arbel, République 122–3.

356 On Ottoman justifications of military activities against the Shiʿi Safawids, see Imber, Myth 22; Haarmann, Staat 357–61; Eberhard, *Polemik* Çıpa, *Making* 6; Atçıl, Safavid Threat; Al-Tikriti, Service 146–8; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 118–22, 271–3.

357 For studies on non-Muslims and their conversion in the Mamluk period, see, e.g., Anawati, Communities; Bosworth, Dignitaries [both parts]; Bosworth, Peoples; Cohen, Jews; Cohen, *Crescent*; Friedmann, Note; Gottheil, Dhimmis; Little, Conversion; Little, Converts; North-rup, Relations; O'Sullivan, Conversion; Richards, Bureaucracy; Stillmann, Communities.

genre of polemical writings urging rulers not to rely on the services of non-Muslims in administrative and other capacities.[358] To a certain degree, it seems that Mamluk rulers, in the hope of gaining the approval of parts of the Muslim population, heeded the demands made in such texts and forced non-Muslims in their service to convert to Islam.[359] While there is no direct evidence that al-Ghawrī knew of this type of literature, the *majālis* texts suggest that members of the court were interested in Christian and Jewish conversions to Islam[360] and discussed whether Christians could be legally employed in the governing apparatus of the realm.[361] It seems plausible that members of the court knew the basic argument advanced by the polemical texts just mentioned; namely, that good Muslim rulers do not employ Christians and Jews. Hence, the fact that al-Ghawrī's court society was almost invariably Sunni Muslim can be interpreted as an attempt on the sultan's side to meet expectations of good governance current among parts of the population of his realm.

5.1.4 *Religious Debates in al-Ghawrī's Salons*

For many members of late Mamluk society, the acquisition, use, transmission, and performative enactment of religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) were deeply religious practices[362] entailing otherworldly merit and *baraka*. As Daniella Talmon-Heller noted, "[t]he study of the religious sciences and their transmission [...], just like prayer and Quran recitation, were regarded as pregnant with *barakah*."[363] As other forms of *baraka*, blessing acquired through knowledge (*barakat al-ʿilm*) emanated from those possessing it and even affected people who did not engage in learned activities, but were merely physically close to those who did.[364]

As seen, learned activities focusing on religious subjects were a central element of court life under al-Ghawrī. Above we have analyzed these activities in depth, taking the differentiation between the various fields of learning as a central element of our analytical framework.[365] There is no need to reiterate our findings. Rather, in what follows, we focus on selected examples of religious

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358   On this genre, see Yarbrough, Genre; Yarbrough, *Friends*, *passim*; Gottheil, Answer; Lazarus-Yafeh, Aspects; Perlmann, Notes; Perlmann, Tract; Ward, Churches.

359   Yarbrough, Genre 139–40.

360   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 90ʳ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 68, 90.

361   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 39–40; (ed. ʿAzzām) 17.

362   Cf. with regard to the transmission of knowledge, Berkey, *Formation* 226.

363   Talmon-Heller, Resources 26.

364   Talmon-Heller, Resources 26–7. See also Chamberlain, *Knowledge* 122; Brown, *Canonization* 347; Meri, *Cult* 104; Talmon-Heller, *Piety* 74.

365   Cf. section 4.2 and its subsections above.

topics that, according to our sources, figured prominently in the scholarly world of al-Ghawrī's court. In doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of what kind of religious knowledge was communicated at his court, in what forms, and for what reasons. At times, the discussions of these topics transcended disciplinary boundaries, thus they call for a topic- and not a discipline-centered approach to gain a more holistic picture of how religious debates among members of al-Ghawrī's court unfolded.

5.1.4.1   Eschatology

Eschatology received a particularly high level of attention in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Thus, it is exceptionally well-suited for a case study of religious debates at the sultan's court. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* includes accounts of more than seventy questions about death and the afterlife, while *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presents five of the *majālis* sessions it recounts as primarily or largely dedicated to eschatological matters.

The prominence of this topic in the *majālis* is noteworthy, but not entirely surprising, given the significance of the afterlife in much of the discursive communication on Islamic religious topics. Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson note: "Concepts of eschatology and the hereafter are among the most characteristic and fundamental elements of faith and spirituality in Islam. [...] Together with the unique oneness and omnipotence of God, concern with the afterlife is a—if not *the*—central religious preoccupation of Islam."[366]

Three forms in which Muslims of the late middle period engaged in Islamic eschatological discourse figure prominently in our *majālis* sources: Exegesis of eschatological statements in the Quran, reflections on individual aspects of the hereafter based on prophetic traditions and related material, and theological considerations of specific contested elements of Islamic eschatology. In what follows, we analyze these aspects of eschatological discourse one by one, beginning with Quranic exegesis.

Eschatology and the life to come are central topics of the Quranic revelation, and according to estimates, one-tenth of the text of the Quran deals with eschatological matters.[367] These eschatological passages fulfill a dual function: they warn the recipients of the text that the end of life as we know it is near, and

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366   Günther and Lawson, Introduction 1. See also Günther, Menschen 114.
367   Lange, *Paradise* 37. See also Günther, Menschen 114. On Quranic eschatology, see, e.g., Abdel Haleem, Paradise; Neuwirth, Discourse; Lawson, Paradise; Hämeen-Anttila, Paradise; Afsaruddin, Dying; Günther, Menschen; Günther, Poetics 182–8; Günther, Gepriesen 17–22; Lange, *Paradise* 37–70.

they promise a joyful eternal life to those who heed these warnings.[368] Its rich
detail and highly poetic language are striking features of the Quranic eschat-
ological material.[369] As is typical for the Quranic mode of discourse, the text
does not deal with topics such as death, judgment day, paradise, and hell in
what readers might perceive as a systematic way in a few clearly marked pas-
sages, rather it returns to these and related issues time and again, in 67 of its
114 suras.[370] Hence, readers do not find in the text a "tangible chronology of
the course of events of the all-decisive *eschaton*,"[371] but face numerous seem-
ingly disparate and not always easily understandable pieces of information.
Therefore, many readers invested considerable interpretative effort to bring
the Quranic material about death, resurrection, and the afterlife into what
they perceived as a coherent narrative.[372] To a large extent, the discussions in
al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as narrated in our sources build on and take part in this
exegetical project of clarifying, harmonizing, and ordering Quranic eschatolo-
gical statements. From the relevant passages in our main sources, no coherent
narrative of Islamic eschatology emerges; indeed, this is to be expected given
the nature of this kind of scholarly engagement and the texts that describe it.[373]
However, these particular modes of discussion and presentation enable us to
develop deep insights into how Muslims of the late middle period participated
in the exegesis of the Quranic eschatological material.

Our sources indicate that the interpretation of relevant sections of the
Quran was a collaborative, but by no means conflict-free project:

> **Question:** "On the saying of Him Most High 'On the Day when their own
> tongues, hands, and feet will testify against them about what they have
> done' [Q 24:24]: Why does He mention the testimony of the limbs against
> the unbelievers, although the testimony of the tongue would be sufficient
> for the confession [of their sins]?"
>
> **Answer:** The sultan of the insightful (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*) said: "So that the
> perfection of His power becomes clear and the doubt[s] of the polytheists
> are eliminated."

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368   Günther, Menschen 113; Günther, Poetics 184.
369   Günther, Menschen 114.
370   Günther, Menschen 114.
371   Günther, Menschen 114.
372   On the consistency of Quranic eschatological material and its internal development, see
       Lange, *Paradise* 48–56.
373   Lange, Introducing 2, argues that large parts of the Islamic eschatological literature are
       "internally diverse, or even contradictory." See also Berger, *Theologie* 184.

> **Question:** "Why does the question not fit the answer [given in] the saying of Him Most High: 'They will say to them, "Why did you testify against us?" and they will reply: "God, who gave speech to everything, has given us speech. […]"'"[374] [Q 41:21]
>
> **Answer:** The sultan of the insightful—may his victory be glorious—said: "There is no doubt that the [former] answer fits the [original] question, since the meaning of His saying 'Why did you testify' is 'Why did you speak in testifying against [us]?' and therefore they replied in His saying 'God has given us speech.'"[375]

The starting point of this discussion seems to be a certain bewilderment on the side of the first unnamed interlocutor regarding the Quranic statement in Q 24:24, that on judgment day, even the hands and feet of the sinners will testify against them.[376] In the unnamed interlocutor's opinion, the seemingly more obvious possibility that the sinners' tongues will speak about their misdeeds is entirely sufficient. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* presents al-Ghawrī as countering this objection by explaining that the notion that even hands and feet will testify against the sinners on judgment day is a sign of God's omnipotence and is well-suited to dispel doubts in the truth of the Quranic message.

The conversation about Q 24:24 could have ended here, but according to our source, it did not. An unnamed interlocutor—presumably someone different from the one who raised the original question—suggested that Q 24:24 should be interpreted in light of Q 41:21. Here, the unnamed participant in the discussion advocated the principle of interpreting the Quran through the Quran (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*), thus, concomitantly suggesting that the sultan's reply to the first question was less than optimal. The sultan, however, did not acquiesce in this criticism, but showed that Q 41:21 dealt with a different question than the one brought forth with regard to Q 24:24.

This section from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* offers further evidence for the assumption that al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provided social space for a comparatively free exchange of ideas in which it was possible to criticize the points of view of the other attendees, including the sultan. Moreover, the text suggests that al-Ghawrī took a personal interest in the interpretation of eschatological material in the Quran. Most importantly, the passage underscores that members of al-Ghawrī's court marveled about certain features of the Quranic eschatological material and tried to use their interpretative capacities to make sense of it.

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374   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

375   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 89–90.

376   On this eschatological concept, see Günther, Poetics 201; Günther, Menschen 119.

In the debate just quoted, the attempt to understand the Quranic eschatological material appears to have taken place on an ad hoc basis, as there is no reference to the body of exegetical literature. However, this was not always the case, as the following passage from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* suggests:

> **Question:** "On the saying of Him Most High: '[Adam,] live with your wife in this garden.' [Q 2:35; 7:19] Was this garden on the Earth or in heaven?"
>
> **Answer:** Fakhr al-Rāzī said in his *Tafsīr*: "There is a disagreement regarding the garden (*janna*) that is mentioned in this verse, as to whether it was on Earth or in heaven and, if one accepts that it was in heaven, whether it is the garden that is the abode of reward (*dār al-thawāb*), that is, the garden of eternity (*jannat al-khuld*) that is promised to those who fear God, or another garden. [...]"[377]

After this introductory statement, the quotation from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) continues with a discussion of four views on this question. The first perspective reviewed is that of the Muʿtazila—here represented by Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) and Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī (d. 322/934)—which, in terms of length, is given more attention than the three other positions combined. The Muʿtazilīs are said to have opined that the garden in which Adam lived was located on Earth, and was not identical with the garden of eternity, the locus of eschatological recompense. The quoted passage enumerates several arguments in favor of this opinion. Regarding the localization of the garden on Earth, it is argued that there is no evidence that it was located anywhere else. The Quranic passage, Q 2:36, which states that Adam and his kin were ordered to go down (*habaṭa*) from the garden after having eaten the forbidden fruit, does not indicate that Adam's garden was located above the world in spatial terms, as the same verb is used elsewhere in the Quran (Q 2:61) to denote horizontal movement.[378] As for the question whether or not the garden of Adam was eternal, the arguments adduced against its eternity are mostly based on Quranic evidence, such as Q 20:120 in which Satan asks Adam, "Shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that never decays?" This passage is perceived as indicating that the garden was not eternal, otherwise, Adam would not have been interested in a tree of eternal life and power. In addition, Satan, after refus-

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[377]   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 131. The passage quotes al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* iii, 3.

[378]   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 131. On this argument, see also Lange, *Paradise* 166.

ing to bow down before Adam (Q 2:34) suffered God's curse and therefore could not have been able to enter the garden of eternity, while he could enter the garden where Adam lived. Finally, it would not make sense for God to create the garden of eternity before judgment day, as it would be contrary to His wisdom to bring into being a part of the world that did not fulfill any function. Hence, the Muʿtazilīs considered it an established fact that the garden of Adam and the garden in which believers would receive their reward in the life to come were two different places.[379]

The second position discussed is identified as that of the Muʿtazilī theologian Muḥammad al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915–6), who disagreed with the remainder of his group in so far as he accepted the Quranic order to Adam to go down when leaving the garden as evidence that it was located in one of the heavens, namely the seventh.[380]

The third position, which is identified in the quoted text as that of "the majority of our colleagues" (*jumhūr aṣḥābina*)[381] and thus receives considerable implicit support from the author, holds that the garden in which Adam lived is the garden of divine recompense. It points to Q 2:35 and Q 7:19, which refer to the garden of Adam with the definite article, thus indicating, according to the rules of Arabic grammar, that these passages refer to a garden that was mentioned previously, therefore, leaving the "abode of recompense" as the only possible option. Moreover, contrary to Muʿtazilī claims, the garden of eternity must already exist, as the Prophet Muḥammad saw it during his ascension to heaven and the souls of the martyrs reside in it, even before judgment day.[382]

The fourth, short position deserves to be quoted in full here: "The fourth position (*qawl*) is that all [of this] is possible, [as] the intellectual proofs (*adilla*) contradict each other. Thus, one must refrain from judgment (*tawaqquf*) and abstain from a definite decision."[383]

Here, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* provides a quotation from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr* that summarizes one of the most important theological and exegetical discussions about Islamic eschatology. As Christian Lange noted, some readers of the Quran found it difficult to pinpoint the precise location of paradise based on the revealed text.[384] Therefore, a lively debate about its location and

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379 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 132–3. On this position, see also Lange, *Paradise* 167; Abrahamov, Creation 89, 91–2.

380 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 133. See also Abrahamov, Creation 91–2.

381 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 133.

382 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 133. See also Lange, *Paradise* 168; Tottoli, Eschatology 863–4; Fierro, Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ 1003–4.

383 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 133. See also Abrahamov, Creation 88.

384 Lange, *Paradise* 166.

its relation to the paradise of Adam arose, with Sunni Muslims usually advocating the third position mentioned in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, according to which the garden of Adam was identical to the place in which believers will receive their recompense, and thus, a place that has already been created.[385]

By including the long quotation from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the anonymous author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* demonstrated that the people around al-Ghawrī were conversant with the exegetical tradition and the richness of eschatological thought it included. Moreover, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* indicates that discussions among al-Ghawrī's court society addressed scholarly issues of exegetical and theological thought that had vexed Muslims for centuries. The claim that such debates took place among the attendees of al-Ghawrī's salons seems credible, given that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* includes accounts of discussions about closely related questions, such as the possible location of paradise on Earth and the question whether paradise and hell exist eternally.[386] While the respective passages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* seem to refer to different discussions and cannot be treated as two independent attestations of the same debate, their existence speaks in favor of the assumption that exegetical discussions about issues of Quranic eschatology took place in the *majālis*.

Furthermore, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* again suggests that at al-Ghawrī's court, it was possible to hold diverging opinions about religious questions. While the pertinent passage clearly lays out the opinion commonly held by Sunni Muslims, it neither rules out nor refutes alternative points of view, and explicitly suggests that in light of the available evidence, a definite decision on the issue seems impossible. This impression is reinforced by the fact that in one of the passages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that deals with similar issues, the sultan defends the Muʿtazilī position that Adam's garden was located on Earth and was not identical with the abode of recompense, although the sultan is presented as disagreeing with the Muʿtazila in his opinion that the abode of recompense already exists.[387] Therefore, we can conclude that the questions of the exact location of Adam's garden and its relation to the eschatological paradise were not an issue on which al-Ghawrī and those around him pressed everyone to embrace a single, predetermined opinion. Rather, we encounter here a certain willingness to accept a considerable level of disagreement and

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385   Lange, *Paradise* 166–8. On this debate, see also Günther, Gepriesen 23; Günther, Poetics 186–7; Rustomji, *Garden* 63; Würtz, *Theologie* 98–9, 135–42.

386   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 80–1, 89.

387   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 80–1.

ambiguity in answering a question that, while of some religious importance, at al-Ghawrī's court apparently did not define what constituted a good Muslim.[388]

However, this acceptance of seemingly contradictory positions was not always the case in the exegetical engagement with eschatological passages from the Quran. Note, for example, the following conversation recounted in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*:

> **Question:** "On the saying of Him Most High: 'when the seas are filled with fire (*sujjirat*)'[389] [Q 81:6] that is, are burning (*iḥtaraqa*). Why did He say here 'when the seas are filled with fire' and elsewhere say, 'when the seas burst forth (*fujjirat*)' [Q 82:3], meaning flowing away (*jarayān*)? In what way [can one achieve] a harmonization (*tawfīq*) of these two noble verses?"
>
> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "[This is] an indication of the order of the matters on the day of judgment, because first, the seas burst forth, then, they are filled with fire, and are burning. There is no contradiction between the two [verses]."[390]

As seen above, in multiple instances the sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* credit the sultan with the ability to harmonize seemingly contradictory prophetic traditions.[391] Here, the source shows this same ability in his approach to Quranic verses about the last day, which might be seen as offering mutually exclusive descriptions of what will happen to the seas. According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the sultan found a solution to this apparent dilemma by putting the seemingly contradictory verses into a chronological order, thus contributing to the development of a coherent narrative of Quranic eschatology. Moreover, the passage constitutes another example of how the source presents the sultan's erudition and competence in dealing with religious questions.

Quranic material was far from the only point of departure for conversations about eschatological topics at al-Ghawrī's court. The picture emerging from our sources matches Christian Lange's observation that "[a]s rich as the Qur'ān is in eschatological ideas and images, it only provides the skeleton for the variegated body of texts that form the Islamic tradition of imagining paradise and

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388   On the fact that Muslims of the middle period often accepted high levels of ambiguity, see Bauer, *Kultur*.
389   My translation, following Lane, *Lexicon* iv, 1308.
390   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 95–6.
391   Cf. section 4.2.6 above.

hell."[392] The body of prophetic traditions that comprises numerous sayings about death, resurrection, and the afterlife was central in fleshing out this "skeleton." According to our sources, the members of al-Ghawrī's court relied heavily on this type of material, especially when discussing seemingly minor details of the eschatological drama.

Note, for example, the following two dialogues narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "If a woman who has had [multiple] husbands dies, who among them is her husband in the hereafter?"
>
> **Answer:** "It is said in *al-Tadhkira* by al-Qurṭubī that if one of a woman's husbands dies, then her last husband is her husband in paradise. Ḥudhayfa[393] [b. al-Yamān (d. ca. 36/657)] said to his wife: 'If you want me to be your husband in paradise, than do not marry [again] after me.' The Messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him salvation—was asked: 'If a woman has two husbands in this world, which of them is her husband in the hereafter?' He said: 'The one of better character (*aḥsanuhumā khulqan*).'[394] And it is said that she can choose if she had several husbands."[395]

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Is the Dajjāl from among the *jinn*s or the humans?"
>
> **Answer:** "Al-Qurṭubī—may God have mercy on him—said: It has been transmitted that a Jew went to the Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—and said: 'Tell me about the Dajjāl, does he belong to the children of Adam or the children of Iblīs?' The Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—said: 'He belongs to the children of Adam, but his father is from the children of Iblīs, and he follows your religion, oh you Jews!'[396] In another *ḥadīth*, it is said that he does not yet exist, but will exist at the end of time. The more correct [opinion] is the first one."[397]

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392   Lange, *Paradise* 71.

393   The text has "Ḥudayfa."

394   The six canonical Sunni collections do not include this tradition.

395   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 192–3. This passage quotes al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tadhkira* ii, 196–7. See also Nagel, Paradise 32; Lange, *Paradise* 158.

396   The six canonical Sunni collections do not include this tradition.

397   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 203–4. This passage quotes al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tadhkira* ii, 401. On the Dajjāl, see also Riexinger, Science Fiction 1252, 1260; Abel, Dadjdjāl 77.

These two passages suggest that, according to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, even apparently minor details of the eschatological drama, such as family relations in paradise, or the origin of the apocalyptical Antichrist figure of the Dajjāl,[398] were of interest to the members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the sultan. Moreover, it is noteworthy that for both questions, at least two possible answers were brought forth. This bears witness to the richness of the eschatological discourse in which members of al-Ghawrī's court took part. Furthermore, in both cases, multiple answers were regarded as valid, although in the second instance, one of the replies was clearly marked as preferable. Again, this suggests that in eschatological matters that did not pertain to the fundamentals of Islamic religious teachings, a certain level of ambiguity existed at al-Ghawrī's court.

Most importantly, both quotations were answered with reference to the same source material. Generally speaking, the replies to both questions were based on statements ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad or one of his Companions. Such *ḥadīth*-based eschatological discourse loomed large in Islamic literature and was particularly rich in content,[399] as scholars were willing to include in their writings eschatological *ḥadīth*s that because of their transmission history would have been unacceptable in, for example, legal matters.[400] Nevertheless, to what degree such problematic traditions should be included remained an issue of contention. Christian Lange therefore differentiates between a "traditionist" strand of eschatological *ḥadīth* works that focused on material that was properly transmitted and a "parenetic" strand that included dramatic and marvelous *ḥadīth*s that appealed to broader readerships, but whose *isnād*s did not necessarily meet scholarly standards.[401]

Where do the traditions appearing in the passages from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* fit into this picture? All of them came from *al-Tadhkira fī aḥwāl al-mawtā wa-umūr al-ākhira* [Memoir about the conditions of the dead [in the grave] and the last things)[402] by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, who hailed from Cordoba and died in Egypt in 671/1273.[403] A full-fledged religious scholar known for his famous *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī penned an eschatological work that was based on prophetic traditions and was clearly part of what Lange defines as "traditionalist" literature. This work was basically a *ḥadīth* collection

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398 On him, see Abel, Dadjdjāl.

399 See Lange, *Paradise* 71–92.

400 Cf. Lange, *Paradise* 82–3.

401 Lange, *Paradise* 82–3.

402 Translation quoted from Lange, *Paradise* 87.

403 Cf. Lange, *Paradise* 87.

focusing on the life in the grave, heaven, hell, and the apocalypse; it included, in addition to prophetic traditions and appropriate Quranic quotations, considerable commentary material that was especially helpful to beginners, as it clarified linguistic and other questions. Possibly because of its easy accessibility, the work enjoyed a very wide reception in the Mamluk realm and beyond. Several later authors abridged, supplemented, and emulated the work, which has come down to us in approximately eighty known manuscripts, which thus attest to its popularity.[404] Al-Qurṭubī's usual practice of quoting traditions with extensive *isnād*s and explicitly rejecting traditions that fall short of his critical standards[405] was likely another reason for his work's favorable reception in scholarly circles.

In the religious communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court, al-Qurṭubī's *al-Tadhkira* was apparently the standard reference work on all eschatological questions that could be answered by reference to prophetic traditions. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which is more consistent than *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in identifying the written texts consulted in al-Ghawrī's salons, includes seven explicit references to *al-Tadhkira*.[406] This makes al-Qurṭubī's work one of the most frequently referenced texts in the entire source corpus on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and suggests that a copy of the work might have been physically present in the salons. This is not surprising, given that, first, *al-Tadhkira* was widely read in late Mamluk times and thus was likely to be quoted during the *majālis* simply because of its general availability. Second, and more importantly, the textual peculiarities of *al-Tadhkira* might have made it a particularly attractive basis for eschatological conversations in the *majlāis*. Al-Qurṭubī's *al-Tadhkira* was a scholarly text that, unlike works of the parenetic strand of eschatological literature, could provide reliable information on religious questions. By referring to this relatively sober text and not to other, more fantastic works, the sultan and the members of his court demonstrated that they were willing and able to participate in the discourse of the *ʿulamāʾ* on the end times, and did not fall prey to possibly more entertaining,[407] but, from a scholarly perspective, problematic types of eschatological literature.

The third type of eschatological discourse in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* was not based primarily on the exegesis of certain passages of the Quran or explicit references to the body of prophetic traditions, but rather addressed specific

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404   Lange, *Paradise* 86–8, 109. See also Rustomji, *Garden* 110–1.

405   Cf. Lange, *Paradise* 162.

406   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 138–9, 192–7, 203–5, 226–8.

407   On the entertainment value of parenetic eschatological texts, see Lange, *Paradise* 110, 119.

contested elements of Islamic theology.[408] *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* includes a particularly clear example of this kind of eschatological reasoning at al-Ghawrī's court:

> **Question:** "Is it possible or not to see (*ruʾya*) God? [And if so,] do the believers see Him before they enter paradise on the day of resurrection or after [they enter paradise]?"
>
> **Answer:** "The truly insightful (*muḥaqqiqūn*)[409] in this matter say that it is correct that He Most High is seen in the sense (*maʿnā*) that one attains the same perceptual state as when one looks at the moon without a [specific] direction (*jiha*) and without a direct encounter (*muqābala*). The believers attain this in paradise. As for the proof that this is correct: Moses—upon whom be peace—requested to see [God], and He Most High made [the vision] conditional on something possible, namely, He made it conditional on [the vision] of the mountain.
>
> [Moreover,] it has been transmitted in the body of traditions on the authority of Abū Hurayra—may God be satisfied with him—that the people said: 'Oh Messenger of God, do we see our Lord on the day of resurrection?' The Messenger of God said: 'Do you feel troubled (*tuḍarrūna*) [when you see] the moon in a night of a full moon?' They said: 'No, oh Messenger of God.' He said: 'And do you feel troubled [when you see] the sun when there are no clouds?' They said: 'No, oh Messenger of God.' He said: 'You will see him in the same way.' The meaning of 'you feel troubled' is 'the vision disturbs (*tushawwishu*) you.'
>
> It is said in *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*: 'It is disputed (*ukhtulifa*) whether it is possible to see Him Most High in this world, while awake or in a dream. It is said 'Yes' and it is said 'No.' As for those who answer in the affirmative, as proof they adduce the saying of him—may God bless him and grant him salvation—'I saw light' and in one version (*riwāya*) '[He is] light, how[410] should I see Him (*nūr, annā arāhu*)' with a *shadda* above the *nūn* of *annā*, and the pronoun of *arāhu* refers to God Most High. That is, [the Prophet said:] 'A light that overwhelmed my sense of seeing covered me in the

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408 On Sunni eschatological theological thought, see Lange, *Paradise* 165–91; Hermansen, Eschatology.

409 On this term and its derivations, see Spevack, Egypt 543; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 26; El-Rouayheb, *History* 28, 32–3, 60, 108; Melvin-Koushki, Renaissance 194–5, 216–7; Brentjes, *Teaching* 174–7; Wisnovsky, Avicennism 351, 354–7, 371–6; Binbaş, *Networks* 96–103.

410 Following Lane, *Lexicon* i, 119, I understand *annā* as a modal and not a local interrogative particle. On this tradition, see also van Ess, *Flowering* 62–3.

night of the heavenly journey.' It has been mentioned that [the vision of God] in a dream has occurred to many of the forefathers, including Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal […].

As for those who answer in the negative, as proof they adduce ʿĀʾisha's statement: 'I was not bereft of the body of the Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—[in the night of the ascension].' We say: 'The ascension took place after [the first] revelation, and it is said that it took place twelve years after his mission [as a prophet]. According to the first assessment, ʿĀʾisha was not yet born by this time, and according to the second assessment, she was not yet married to the Prophet, because he married her only in Medina after the emigration.' ' "[411]

This very dense theological discussion begins with a twofold question: First, is it possible to see God at all? And if so, can one see Him before entering paradise on judgment day? The reply suggests that both parts of the question should be answered in the affirmative. It begins with the statement that according to experts, it is possible to perceive God in a vision-like way, although only indirectly and without directionality of perception. This position is then corroborated with references to the Quran and the corpus of prophetic traditions. The relevant Quranic verse Q 7:143 reads:

When Moses came for Our appointment, and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My lord, show Yourself to me: let me see You!" He said: "You will never see Me, but look at the mountain: if it remains standing firm, you will see Me," and when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble: Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said: "Glory be to You! To You I turn in repentance! I am the first to believe!"

Despite God's clear statement "You will never see Me," this Quranic verse is seen as affirming the possibility of seeing God, given that He promised Moses that he would see Him, provided a certain mountain remained standing. Although the mountain crumbled when beholding God, the unnamed interlocutor in al-Ghawrī's *majlis* sees God's conditional phrase "if it remains standing firm, you will see Me" as indicating the possibility of seeing God, since the vision of God is made here "conditional on something that is possible" in itself, namely a mountain standing firm.[412]

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411   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 239–40.

412   On this argument, see also Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649; Brodersen, *Kalām* 574, 577.

The second proof that the unnamed interlocutor adduces is a *ḥadīth* narrated in very similar versions in the authoritative collections of al-Bukhārī,[413] Muslim,[414] al-Tirmidhī,[415] Abū Dāwūd,[416] and Ibn Māja.[417] According to this tradition, Muḥammad likened the vision of God to the view of the moon and the sun on clear days. Thus, he compared seeing God to the perception of bright light and made it unambiguously clear that Muslim believers will be able to see God on the day of resurrection.[418]

Based on evidence from the Quran and *ḥadīth*, the unnamed interlocutor thus establishes that the vision of God is possible, especially in the afterlife. He then turns to the question whether God can be seen in this world, and claims to answer it in the form of a quotation from *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* (The collection of the extensive works), an *uṣūl al-fiqh* work by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/ 1370). However, an examination of the pertinent textual tradition showed that the section in question did not come from *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, but was, rather, a partly paraphrased and abbreviated quotation from a commentary on al-Subkī's text. This commentary is called *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ fī ḥall Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* (The bright full moon on solving [the problems] of 'The collection of the extensive works') and was written by Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459).[419]

As mentioned, the section quoted from this work deals with the question whether it is possible to see God in this world, either while asleep or awake. Those who deem it possible adduce the example of the Prophet Muḥammad who, according to two *ḥadīth*s in Muslim's collection, told one of his Companions that he had seen God. The more detailed of these traditions, narrated on the authority of ʿAbdallāh b. Shaqīq, reads:

> I said to Abū Dharr: "If I had I seen the Messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him salvation—, I would have asked him [something]." Abū Dharr said: "About which thing would you have asked him?" I said:

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413   Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, no. 4581; *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, nos. 7437, 7438, 7439; *Kitāb al-Riqāq*, no. 6573.

414   Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raqāʾiq*, no. 2968; *Kitāb al-Īmān*, no. 182.

415   Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Kitāb Ṣifat al-janna*, no. 2755.

416   Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Sunna*, no. 4730.

417   Ibn Māja, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Muqaddima*, no. 184.

418   On this tradition, see also van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 412; Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649; Brodersen, *Kalām* 575.

419   On al-Maḥallī, cf. Pellat, al-Maḥallī 1223. The corresponding passage is al-Maḥallī, *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ*, printed in the margin of al-ʿAṭṭār, *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār* ii, 466–7.

"I would have asked him: 'Have you seen your Lord?'" Abū Dharr said: "I asked him [this question] and he said: 'I saw light.'"[420]

This tradition is interpreted as meaning that Muḥammad indeed saw God in the form of light—an interpretation that could be supported through reference to the Quran, where God is likewise described as light (Q 24:35). Moreover, the tradition is understood as referring to the Prophet's ascension to heaven, as is explicit in the following statement attributed to the Prophet in *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ*: "A light that overwhelmed my sense of seeing covered me in the night of the heavenly journey." Muslim's collection features a very similar statement,[421] albeit without reference to the ascension. These statements suggest that at a certain time in their history of interpretation, *ḥadīth*s speaking of Muḥammad's vision of God in the form of light were thought to describe an event during the Prophet's ascension. This was the case although the earliest versions of the *ḥadīth*s in question did not explicitly refer to Muḥammad's heavenly journey.[422] As a final argument in favor of the possibility of seeing God in this world, *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* adduces the case of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), who is said to have seen God in a dream.

This connection between the *ḥadīth*s about the Prophet's vision of God and his ascension is also taken for granted when the unnamed interlocutor in the passage from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* given above discusses the view of those who deny that it is possible to see Him in this world. No source for this part of the answer could be located and it seems possible that it originated from debates at al-Ghawrī's court. Here, the main argument is that the Prophet's wife ʿĀʾisha (d. 58/678) allegedly claimed that the Prophet was physically present with her during the night of his ascension and thus, this would mean that his journey to the heavens was purely spiritual in nature.[423] The unnamed interlocutor, however, rejects this argument by pointing out that according to the generally accepted chronology, ʿĀʾisha was not yet born or at least not yet married to the Prophet when the latter undertook his heavenly journey. Thus, in

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420   Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Īmān*, no. 178 (both traditions).

421   Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Īmān*, no. 179.

422   On the significance of ascension narratives for Muslim theological eschatological discourse, see also Tottoli, Eschatology 863; Günther, Gepriesen 16. Moreover, see van Ess, *Flowering* 45–77, on the ascension, Muḥammad's vision of God, and anthropomorphism. On prophetic traditions about the Prophet's vision of paradise and hell, see Günther, Gepriesen 28–31; Günther, Poetics 188–91; Günther, Fictional Narration 455–63.

423   On whether the Prophet traveled to heaven only in spirit, but not physically, see, e.g., Rustomji, *Garden* 30–1; van Ess, *Flowering* 62.

al-Kawkab al-durrī, the unnamed interlocutor clearly affirms that one can see God in this world.

This opinion could not be taken for granted, given that several religious groups in early Islam, including the Muʿtazila, strongly rejected the notion that humans could see God directly, in the here and now or in the hereafter. For Muʿtazilīs, assuming the possibility of a vision of God was tantamount to ascribing materiality, corporality, and thus limitation to Him—all qualities irreconcilable with the Muʿtazilī understanding of the divine. Accusing their adversaries of anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*), the Muʿtazila used Quranic statements such as "No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision" (Q 6:103) to support their view.[424]

Ashʿarīs rejected the Muʿtazilī position because in their understanding, God had promised the believers that they would really see Him in the hereafter. Nevertheless, Ashʿarī theologians tried to protect themselves against accusations of anthropomorphism by stating that believers should not inquire about the details of this future vision of the Lord, but rather accept it "without asking how" (*bi-lā kayf*) it would take place.[425] Sunnis of other persuasions, such as Māturīdīs, held similar views.[426] Despite the *bi-lā kayf* teaching, many Sunni authors of the middle period—especially those writing for broader audiences—authored detailed descriptions of how the believers in paradise would come to see God every Friday while He would be seated on His throne and surrounded by prophets, martyrs, and other believers.[427] Moreover, most Sunnis agreed that while it was possible to see God in this world, this special honor was limited to the Prophet.[428]

Thus, the unnamed interlocutor in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* clearly embraces a Sunni position when he considers the vision of God possible, both in this world and the next. Yet, he does not participate in the broader trend of describing the believers' beholding God in lavish and fanciful details, but rather states that

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424   Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 95. See also Lange, *Paradise* 180, 182; Moazzen, Garden 567; Lane, "Reclining" 246–7; Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649; Brodersen, *Kalām* 575–6. On the early theological debates on this question, see van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 411–5. On Q 6:103 in this context, see Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649.

425   Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 95–6. See also Moazzen, Garden 567; Berger, *Theologie* 186; Brodersen, *Kalām* 576–8, 580–2.

426   Madelung, al-Māturīdī 846; Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649. See also Brodersen, *Kalām* 390–444, 573–83.

427   Lange, *Paradise* 152–3. See also Lange, *Paradise* 95, 99; Smith and Haddad, *Understanding* 96; Rustomji, *Garden* 89; al-Azmeh, Rhetoric 227–31; Jarrar, Strategies 283–5; van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 412–3.

428   Gimaret, Ruʾyat Allāh 649.

the believers will see God "without a [specific] direction and without direct encounter," in order to make clear the otherness of this visual experience in the hereafter.

The unnamed interlocutor does not merely state his position, but uses theological arguments to support it and reject others. Yet, the only text that he quotes—apart from the Quran and collections of traditions—is not from the field of *kalām* and *ʿaqīda*, but from a legal context: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's commentary *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* on Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's *uṣūl al-fiqh* work *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*. How can we explain this seemingly idiosyncratic choice for his source?

The quoted passage from *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* forms part of a larger discussion connecting the spheres of legal and theological thinking. It deals with the question whether a Muslim lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in independent rational inquiry may follow the opinions of an authority in matters of the basics of religion (*taqlīd fī uṣūl al-dīn*).[429] Al-Subkī—and with him al-Maḥallī—explains that according to al-Ashʿarī, *taqlīd* is not sufficient in such matters. Al-Subkī thereafter lists tenets that every Muslim must be certain about, such as the belief that the world is created, that it has a creator who is the One God, and that the latter is indivisible and eternal. Together with such mandatory points of belief, al-Subkī also enumerates a small number of issues about which Sunni Muslims can hold differing views, such as whether God's essence can be known in the afterlife. Together with its introduction, the discussion of the teachings about which Muslims must be certain covers seven pages in the modern edition of al-Subkī's work[430] and constitutes in itself a sizable creed of Sunni Islam.

Al-Subkī mentions the question whether or not God can be seen in the context of tenets that deal with eschatological matters. To him, Sunni Muslims must affirm that the believers will see God on the day of resurrection, but he concedes that people may hold differing opinions as to whether it is possible to see God in this world, be it awake or in a dream. Because he is only interested in listing key tenets, al-Subkī does not provide his readers with pro and contra arguments, but states, in just eight words, that the issue is controversial.[431] Here, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī takes over: In his commentary, he uses

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429   On this problem, see Frank, Knowledge; Frank, al-Ghazālī; Izutsu, *Concept* 119–30; van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 45–52. For a discussion of the topic by a member of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 25ᵛ–27ʳ, 31ᵛ–44ʳ.

430   Al-Subkī, *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* 123–30.

431   Al-Subkī, *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* 125.

al-Subkī's eight words as a point of departure for a lengthy discussion of pertinent arguments, which are then, in turn, quoted by the unnamed interlocutor in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

Thus, although the quotation in question comes from an *uṣūl al-fiqh* text, it is more precise to characterize it as part of a commentary on a creed that al-Subkī included in his discussion of the issue of *taqlīd fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Given that the term *uṣūl al-dīn* encompasses, according to Daniel Gimaret, "articles of dogma, the *ʿaḳāʾid* or 'truths which must be believed,'"[432] the strongly theological character of the quotation is understandable.[433]

Why, however, did the unnamed interlocutor in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* not rely directly on a theological text to discuss the possibility of the vision of God, but rather opt for the somewhat convoluted method of addressing the issue through a commentary on a creed included in a work of legal scholarship? A possible answer lies in the person of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥallī and the nature of his scholarly output. Al-Maḥallī was a famous Cairo-based *madrasa* teacher who authored commentaries on several of the standard texts used in Mamluk higher education. Among these didactic commentaries, *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* appears to have been particularly successful, as it survives in numerous manuscripts and was the subject of at least eleven supercommentaries.[434]

In light of the popularity of *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* as a teaching text, it stands to reason that most *ʿulamāʾ* of late Mamluk Cairo would be acquainted with *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ*. Moreover, given the limited role that *kalām* played in the *madrasa* education of the period, late Mamluk *ʿulamāʾ* were probably more likely to have been instructed in a famous *uṣūl al-fiqh* commentary such as *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* than in an advanced *kalām* compendium.

Thus, one—admittedly quite speculative—explanation for the quotation of *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* might be that the person answering the question about the vision of God was a local scholar who had studied or taught *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* and therefore was familiar with its contents. At the same time, this scholar might have been unable or unwilling to refer to a technical *kalām* text. Alternatively, the considerable prestige that *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* apparently enjoyed in the communicative sphere of Mamluk education might have influenced the interlocutor's choice.

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432   Gimaret, Uṣūl al-dīn 930.

433   On the relationship between *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām*, see, e.g., Spevack, Egypt 542; Lange, *Justice* 186–7, Würtz, *Theologie* 72; Al-Tikriti, Voice 63; Eichner, *Tradition* xii, 235–8.

434   Pellat, al-Maḥallī 1223; Brockelmann, *Geschichte* ii, 109; Suppl. ii, 105 (on supercommentaries).

Although for the time being it seems impossible to corroborate either of these two possible explanations, the very fact that *al-Badr al-lāmi*ʿ appears in eschatological discussions at al-Ghawrī's court is noteworthy for several reasons. First, *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* and especially *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* were, in the first decades of the tenth/sixteenth century, absolute state-of-the-art works in the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This suggests that the *majālis* participants kept pace with broader developments in religious learning.

Second, the fact that a teaching commentary such as *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ* appeared as a reference text in the context of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* suggests a rather close connection between the sultan's salons and the system of *madrasa* education in late Mamluk Cairo. Most probably, this connection was established and maintained by *majālis* attendees who had received their training in Mamluk *madrasa*s or taught there.

Third, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not mention the title *al-Badr al-lāmiʿ*. Rather, the former text attributes the quotation from the latter work to the text on which it is based, *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, suggesting that for scholars of the late Mamluk period, it was possible to refer to base texts when they were actually quoting their commentaries. This indicates that a commentary could eclipse its base text in scholarly use, while authors would still give the title of the base text when naming their source. This observation might have far-reaching implications for the study of sources used by late Mamluk scholars, as it suggests that direct references to titles should not necessarily be taken at face value, but must be checked against the—often still largely uncharted—commentary tradition.

Taken together, the debate regarding whether and under what circumstances believers can see God indicates that members of al-Ghawrī's court were able and willing to discuss eschatological questions in reference to and fully aware of the mature theological tradition of Sunni Islam. Elements of this tradition were available to them through scholarly works that they most likely knew from other stages of their educational careers. Moreover, members of al-Ghawrī's court considered the answers offered by scholarly theology as relevant when reflecting about the fate of humankind in the hereafter.

By way of conclusion, we can contextualize our results on eschatological debates in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* against the background of Mamluk religious life. It is difficult to ascertain why considerations about the end times and the hereafter were evidently such important issues for the sultan and those around him. In addition to a general interest in the afterlife that permeates much of Islamic religious thought, there is evidence that the Mamluk period was a time of heightened eschatological expectations. Jonathan Berkey speaks of "a strong apocalyptic strand" perceivable in religious texts from the period, texts that were written by and for people who "suspected the imminent arrival of an era of

convulsion."[435] In al-Ghawrī's period, this fascination with the hereafter might have been informed by the closeness of the end of the first millennium of the Islamic calendar, which brought with it a major wave of eschatological anxiety.[436]

In addition to such religious motivations, eschatological debates offered the Mamluk ruling elite opportunities to reaffirm the common Sunni identity of the sultanate by endorsing theological positions of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*, while refuting the views of other Muslim groups, such as the Muʿtazila. As we saw, religious teachings of other Muslim groups were indeed present in the eschatological discussions at the sultan's court, although they apparently functioned mostly as intellectual sparring partners to be refuted. However, we also saw that members of the sultan's court were willing to accept a rather high level of ambiguity in relation to eschatological issues that were not considered fundamentals of Sunni Islam.

Moreover, eschatological considerations offered another opportunity to present al-Ghawrī as a wise ruler who was able to harmonize seemingly contradictory statements in the foundational texts of Islam. As seen above with regard to the scholarly discipline of *ḥadīth* studies,[437] crediting the sultan with this ability was a particularly efficient way to showcase his intellectual talent.

Finally, eschatological debates provided the sultan and those around him with opportunities to display their erudition in general and their close connection to the learned elite's scholarly activities in particular. By discussing the same questions and relying on the same texts as contemporaneous *ʿulamāʾ* elsewhere, the members of al-Ghawrī's court demonstrated that they participated in the religious scholarship of their time.

5.1.4.2   God's Attributes and the Concept of Faith

The analysis of other disputations about issues from the fields of *kalām* and *ʿaqīda* reinforces this impression of a close connection between the religious debates at al-Ghawrī's court and the world of late Mamluk religious scholarship more broadly.

Since its very beginnings, *kalām* addressed questions concerning God's attributes (*ṣifāt*), such as the status of these attributes in relation to His essence (*dhāt*), their internal division, or their number.[438] This last point was also raised by Sultan al-Ghawrī in a *majlis* that is narrated in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*:

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435   Berkey, *Preaching* 46 (both quotations).

436   Saleh, Paradise 941. See also Moin, *Sovereign*, esp. 3–4, 10–1, 133–8, 152–5, 163–7.

437   Cf. section 4.2.6 above.

438   On these discussions, see, e.g., El-Bizri, God.

> **Second Question:** Our lord the sultan said "What is the number of the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God Most High?"
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>   **Answer:** I said: "Seven according to the Shāfiʿīs, and they are knowledge, power, will, hearing, sight, life, and speech. The Ḥanafīs add creating (*takhlīq*) to them."[439]

Prima facie, the first-person narrator's answer appears puzzling, as he replied to a question about a theological issue by pointing out the differences between two groups identified by the names of schools of law—the Shāfiʿīs and the Ḥanafīs. This feature of identifying theological teachings with specific schools of law recurs throughout the *majālis* text. What stands behind this is the close relationship between the Ḥanafī school of law and the theological school of the Māturīdiyya, named after its founder Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944).[440] Since the beginning of the history of this school, Māturīdīs emphasized that they transmitted and built upon the theological teachings of *imām* Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), and therefore referred to themselves as his *aṣḥāb* (adherents).[441] Later, other theological groups took over this designation of "*aṣḥāb* Abī Ḥanīfa" when speaking about the Māturīdiyya.[442] The fact that many people who embraced Māturīdī theology were Ḥanafīs in terms of *fiqh* and vice versa made this designation even more self-evident in the middle period.[443]

Obviously informed by this terminological convention, the texts about al-Ghawrī's *majālis* use the term "Shāfiʿī" to refer to positions usually held by the other major school of Sunni theology, that is, the Ashʿariyya. The fact that most, though by no means all Shāfiʿī scholars of late Mamluk Egypt and Syria followed the theological teachings of al-Ashʿarī and his associates surely contributed to this development.[444]

A look at the respective positions of the Ashʿariyya and Māturīdiyya confirms this interpretation. According to the reply given to the sultan, Shāfiʿīs held that God's attributes included "knowledge, power, will, hearing, sight, life, and

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439   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 188.
440   On the history and early development of this school, see Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī*; Rudolph, Tradition.
441   Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 5, 360. See also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 4–7, 354; Rudolph, Tradition 292.
442   Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 7, 9. See also Lange, Sins 165.
443   Madelung, Spread 109. See also Berger, *Theologie* 85; Lange, Sins 160–1; Eichner, Handbooks 496; Bruckmayr, Spread.
444   Cf. Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 8; Madelung, Spread 109–10. See also Madelung, Māturīdiyya 848; Lange, Sins 161; Spevack, Egypt 537; Eichner, Handbooks 496.

speech." Both in content and order, this list of seven attributes is identical to the one usually provided by Ashʿarīs of the time.[445] Moreover, the inclusion of creating (*takhlīq*) as an additional attribute was a feature that appeared around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century in the theological context from which the Māturīdī school developed.[446] Taken together, these findings indicate that the members of the *majālis* expressed their theological differences by reference to their legal *madhhab*s.[447]

Although one of the most prominent points of contention, the number of God's attributes was far from the only theological question on which Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs disagreed.[448] When early Ḥanafī-Māturīdīs, many of whom originated in Transoxania, first came into close contact with adherents of al-Ashʿarī's school in the fifth/eleventh century, members of the two schools began to engage in intense and heated disputes. Among other aspects, Ashʿarī theologians rejected Māturīdī views on God's attributes as uncanonical innovations. Transoxanian Ḥanafī authors replied in kind and declared that belief in certain Ashʿarī doctrines constituted unbelief (*kufr*). These controversies had a profound impact on the Transoxanian theologians and prompted them to side publicly with the teachings of al-Māturīdī, whom they came to recognize as their leading authority. As Ulrich Rudolph pointed out, the conflicts with the Ashʿarīs were thus decisive in the development of a Māturīdī identity.[449]

These doctrinal disputes had severe consequences in everyday life. In Khurasān, Seljuq authorities sympathetic to the Māturīdiyya openly cursed al-Ashʿarī and persecuted his adherents. Conflicts in Iranian towns between groups who identified themselves as adherents of each school erupted into what Wilferd Madelung characterized as "extensive factional warfare"[450] that involved "recurring rioting and wide destruction."[451] At the same time, the

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445 El-Bizri, God 128.

446 Bernard, al-Nasafī 42–3, 65, 87 (but see also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 88–105). See also Schmidtke, Theologie 183; Würtz, *Theologie* 171, 255–7. On *takhlīq* as a term partially synonymous with *khalq*, see also van Ess, *Theologie* iii, 186–7; iv, 446. On Māturīdī teachings on God's attributes in detail, see Brodersen, *Kalām*.

447 This seems to stand in conflict with the assumption in Eichner, *Tradition* 386, that in the later middle period, "the opposition between Māturīdite and Ashʿarite teachings was no longer perceived primarily as situated in the context of an opposition between *madhhab*s but rather as a matter of doctrinal argument."

448 Rudolph, Tradition 291–2.

449 Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 357–60; Rudolph, Entstehen 396, 398–403; Madelung, Spread 125–6; Madelung, al-Māturīdiyya 847 (on the charge of *kufr*). See also Rudolph, Tradition 290–3; Berger, Interpretations 695–6.

450 Madelung, al-Māturīdiyya 847.

451 Madelung, Spread 138. See also Thiele, Cordoba 234; Mulder, Mausoleum 24. On the city

Māturīdiyya continued to spread westward with the support of Turkic military rulers who predominantly adhered to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and Māturīdī theology. As a part of this process, Māturīdī scholars began to publicize their teachings in Syria around the middle of the sixth/twelfth century. As in Egypt, they encountered a predominantly Shāfiʿī and Ashʿarī population.[452]

Among the theological topics debated between the two schools, in the sources on al-Ghawrī's salons, the concept of faith (*īmān*)[453] received particular attention. An analysis of the discussions on this subject helps us develop general insights into religious life at the sultan's court. Before analyzing the pertinent discussions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, however, we must first briefly review their theological background.

Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs held conflicting opinions about several aspects of faith, including its constituent elements. The Ashʿarī tradition saw *taṣdīq* by the heart (*qalb*) as the most important part of faith.[454] The question of the exact meaning and translation of *taṣdīq*, the verbal noun of the second form of the root *ṣ-d-q*, has received considerable attention in Western scholarship. As a verb, this form is often translated as "to believe [someone]," "to accept as true," or "to consider to be true." Yet, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith pointed out, the concept of truth that stands behind the form *taṣdīq* can hardly be rendered into English with a single word or phrase.[455] It includes the conviction that the subjects of *taṣdīq* recount truthfully what is on their mind, and also that their statements actually conform to reality. Thus, according to Smith, *taṣdīq* not only implies that one thinks that someone says the truth, but it also includes an active component on the part of the one who performs it and therefore "means not simply 'to believe' a proposition, but rather to recognize a truth and to existentialize it."[456]

How did Ashʿarī authors define the object of *taṣdīq*? Building on Smith's results, Frank Griffel showed that to early authors such as the Basran theologian Muḥammad al-Baqillānī (d. 403/1013), God Himself was the main subject of *taṣ*-

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of Nishapur that was ruined by this kind of intercommunal conflict, see Bulliet, *Patricians*.

452   Madelung, al-Māturīdiyya 847. On the spread of the Māturīdiyya in Mamluk territory, see Bruckmayr, Spread 62, 66–7.

453   Cf. for the translation of *īmān* as "faith," Smith, Faith 98.

454   Gardet, Īmān 1170; Gardet, Noms 73–5. See also Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 333; Izutsu, *Concept* 140–5.

455   See also Griffel, Concept 122.

456   Smith, Faith 110. Cf. for the entire paragraph, Smith, Faith 101–11. See also Frank, Knowledge 39–42. On *taṣdīq* in philosophical and theological terminology, see, e.g., Wolfson, Terms; van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 95–113.

dīq. Thus, believers had to be convinced that God spoke truthfully, that is, that He did not say something which He knew was wrong, and that what He said was actually true in reality.[457] However, later Ashʿarī authors from the time of al-Ghazālī (i.e., early sixth/twelfth century) onward defined the Prophet and his message as the real subjects of *taṣdīq*. Being a *muṣṣadiq* (one who performs *taṣdīq*) came to mean that one held that Muḥammad's revelation corresponded to reality and that the Prophet was sincere in conveying it.[458]

Yet, believers not only had to perform *taṣdīq*, but—at least in later Ashʿarī thought—were also obliged to affirm their faith verbally if they were physically able to do so.[459] Moreover, according to later Ashʿarism, the actions of true believers were in accordance with their *taṣdīq* and affirmation.[460] However, in contrast to the doctrine of the Muʿtazilīs and the Khārijīs, early Islamic theological schools from which Ashʿarīs sought to distinguish themselves, this did not mean that one ceased to be a believer if one sinned. The Muʿtazilīs had argued that believing sinners (sg. *fāsiq*) held a position between that of believers and unbelievers. In the Khārijī view, such persons were outright unbelievers (sg. *kāfir*). By contrast, most Ashʿarīs saw righteous actions not as the most fundamental aspect of faith, but rather as its perfection.[461]

Together, these three elements made up a widespread tripartite definition of faith: "Faith (*īmān*) is *taṣdīq* with the heart, affirmation (*iqrār*) with the tongue, and action (*ʿamal*) with the limbs (*bi-l-arkān*)."[462] According to our sources, this formula, which appears in standard reference works of the Ashʿarī school of the late middle period, such as al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*, was also quoted in al-Ghawrī's salons:

> **Third Question:** "Faith is *taṣdīq* with the heart, affirmation with the tongue, and action with the limbs. Why then did the Prophet—God bless him and grant him salvation—say, when he was asked what faith (*īmān*)

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457   Griffel, *Apostasie* 170–3, 176; Griffel, Concept 123.

458   Griffel, *Apostasie* 295–6, 306, 321–2; Griffel, Concept 122–7. See also Frank, al-Ghazālī 213; Izutsu, *Concept* 28.

459   Gardet, Īmān 1170; Watt, Conception 7. See also Gardet, Noms 70–3, 75–7; Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 334.

460   Gardet, Īmān 1170–1; Watt, Conception 7. See also Izutsu, *Concept* 142–3; Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 334.

461   Gardet, Īmān 1171; Gardet, Noms 69–70, 76–8. On the Khārijī and Muʿtazilī views, see also Izutsu, *Concept* 1–16, 35–56, 159–63, and *passim*.

462   Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 528. See also, e.g., Smith, Faith 96; Frank, Knowledge 38; Gardet, Noms 77–8; Izutsu, *Concept* 92–4; Laoust, *Profession* 77–8. For *arkān* as "limbs" rather than "pillars," cf. van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 356.

was: '[Faith is] the testimony (*shahāda*) that there is no god but God, that you perform the prayer, fast in Ramaḍān, make the pilgrimage to the House, etc.'[463] and did not say '[It is] *taṣdīq* and affirmation.'?"

Answer: Our lord the sultan said: "The former is faith in general (*ijmālī*), and the *ḥadīth* is its detailed exposition (*tafṣīl*)."[464]

This question, obviously posed by an adherent of the Ashʿarī definition of faith, put the three-part definition side-by-side with a *ḥadīth* that enumerated central elements of Islam. Since the early Islamic period, similar prophetic traditions were employed to specify the tenets of Islam—or, as the sultan is reported to have said in his reply, to give a "detailed exposition" of them.[465]

The Ashʿarī understanding of faith was not uncontested. Using the same basic elements as their Ashʿarī peers, Māturīdī scholars developed a different definition of *īmān* that regarded verbal affirmation (*qawl* or *iqrār*) as constitutive. Most Māturīdī thinkers saw *taṣdīq* with the heart as another, but clearly less prominent part of faith, one that merely guaranteed that affirmation with the tongue (*bi-l-lisān*) was sincere. Moreover, both early Ḥanafīs and later Māturīdīs denied that human actions necessarily played any part in the definition of faith.[466]

In the dialogue that immediately follows the one cited above in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, an inconspicuous reference to this Māturīdī teaching is made:

Fourth Question: "If someone believes in God and His Messenger with the heart without [affirming it with] the tongue, is he a believer or not?"

Answer: I said: "No, because Pharaoh—may he be cursed—knew that Moses was right and that God Most High is One, but since he did not affirm it with the tongue, we do not consider him a Muslim. In *al-Fuṣūl al-*

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463 This *ḥadīth* appears in similar versions in the Sunni collections of canonical traditions. See, e.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad, Musnad ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*, no. 182; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Īmān*, no. 12; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Sunna*, no. 4077.

464 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 57–8.

465 Cf. on these traditions and their role in itemizing the tenets of Islam Nagel, *Theologie* 71–2; Gardet, Noms 79–81.

466 Gardet, Īmān 1171; Gardet, Noms 71–5, 78. See also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 38–9, 53–4, 73, 76, 97, 121, 123, 128–9, 235, 345; Rudolph, Tradition 282, 284; van Ess, *Theologie* i, 195; iv, 568; Izutsu, *Concept* 89–90, 130–2, 135–8, 149–51; Wensinck, *Creed* 125–6, 131–8, 141–2, 194, 229–30; Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 333; Badeen, *Theologie* 32–3; Madelung, al-Māturīdī 847; Madelung, Doctrine 233; Madelung, al-Māturīdiyya 848; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 114–5.

'Imādī [sic], [the author] said: 'Whoever believes with the heart without [affirming it with] the tongue is an unbeliever.' "[467]

The question of the status of people who only believe inwardly, but do not profess their faith in words relates directly to the differences between the Ashʿarī and the Māturīdī definitions of *īmān*. Since for Ashʿarīs, *taṣdīq* was the most important component, people who did not affirm their faith verbally could still be regarded as believers.[468] Followers of al-Māturīdī, however, considered such people unbelievers, as is clear in an *ʿaqīda* work which was falsely attributed to al-Māturīdī, but which surely originated in his school:

> *Īmān* is *iqrār* by the tongue and *taṣdīq* by the heart. If someone does not perform *iqrār* by the tongue in spite of [having] the ability [to do so, this person] is not a believer. [...] For refraining from expressing (*bayān*) [one's] belief] without any [reasonable] excuse (*ʿudhr*) shows that one's *taṣdīq* has lapsed.[469]

In his answer to the question about the absence of a verbal affirmation of *īmān*, the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* likewise built on a work from the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition. *Al-Fuṣūl al-ʿImādiyya* was an alternative name of the legal work *Kitāb Fuṣūl al-iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* by Abū l-Fatḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. after 651/1253). Al-Marghīnānī was a scion of a famous Ḥanafī-Māturīdī scholarly family from Transoxania, the historical heartland of the Māturīdiyya.[470] The reference to his *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿImādiyya* is another example of the phenomenon discussed above that attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* relied on legal texts when discussing issues of theology.[471]

In his reply, the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentioned the Quranic figure of Pharaoh as an example of a person who inwardly recognized a prophet's truthfulness, but did not openly profess his faith. Thereby, the narrator partook in one of the most heated theological debates of the later middle and early modern periods.[472] In the Quran, the figure of

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467   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 58.

468   Gardet, *Noms* 102.

469   (Pseudo-)al-Māturīdī, *Risāla fī l-ʿAqāʾid*, fols. 5ᵛ–6ʳ. See also Izutsu, *Concept* 151. Cf. for the spurious character of this work, Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 365.

470   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 475–6; Suppl. i, 656; Heffening, al-Marghīnānī. It has not been possible to locate the quoted statement in al-Marghīnānī's work.

471   See the preceding section.

472   Ormsby, Pharaoh 471. See also Ormsby, *Theodicy* 93–4. For other references to this debate

Pharaoh is presented as Moses' adversary who, as one of his many misdeeds, claimed divine status for himself (cf. Q 79:24).[473] Yet, many exegetes discerned a certain level of ambiguity in the Quranic characterization of Pharaoh, given the description of his death in Q 10:90:

> We took the Children of Israel across the sea. Pharaoh and his troops pursued them in arrogance and aggression. But as he was drowning he cried, 'I believe there is no God except the one the Children of Israel believe in. I submit to Him.'

Does this passage indicate that Pharaoh genuinely believed in God? In the view of most exegetes, the answer was no. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, it was physically impossible for Pharaoh to utter a profession of faith while drowning and therefore, the Quranic report was of Pharaoh's internal thoughts. Moreover, to al-Rāzī, professions of faith made with the knowledge of impending punishment are invalid.[474]

While most scholars agreed with al-Rāzī's position, there were also dissenting voices, including the famous Sufi Ibn al-ʿArabī who held that, through God's benefaction, Pharaoh became a believer before his death.[475] The arguments of Ibn al-ʿArabī and those who agreed with him have been analyzed in detail by Eric Ormsby and need not detain us here.[476] What is important here is the fact that their position fueled a debate to which both the Ottoman prince Qurqud and the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* contributed. Qurqud did so briefly in his above-mentioned treatise,[477] while the first-person narrator voiced his opinion in the passage just quoted. Through their contributions, these *majālis* attendees demonstrated that they were well aware of the major issues in Sunni scholarship of their time and that they were able to take positions in the ongoing debates. Thus, they presented themselves as participants in the elite scholarly communicative culture of their time, particularly since "there was a clear consensus that 'dangerous' material that might unsettle the faith was not appropriate for non-scholar[s] [...]. This was especially a concern for material that dealt with complex theological issues, such

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in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, see Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 135–6; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 68.

473   Ormsby, Pharaoh 472.

474   Ormsby, Pharaoh 474. Cf. for the entire paragraph, Ormsby, Pharaoh 473–5.

475   Ormsby, Pharaoh 474.

476   See Ormsby, Pharaoh 474–482.

477   Cf. Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 27ᵛ–28ʳ, 29ʳ–30ʳ.

as God's attributes."[478] By conducting learned debates about such issues, the members of al-Ghawrī's court society demonstrated that they were able to participate in the scholarly culture of their time. At the same time, they affirmed the relevance and permissibility of such attempts to approach the mysteries of the divine, in opposition to contemporaneous religious currents prominent, inter alia, among Ḥanbalīs who sought to ban all speculative engagement in theological matters.[479]

It is fitting that the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* dedicated a significant part of their theological efforts to the question of the definition of faith. As Nabil Al-Tikriti argued, Sunni thinkers of the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries went through "a genuine crisis of faith"[480] that made attempts "to delimit and define faith […] an urgent task rather than an idle theologic exercise."[481] Perceiving themselves as under attack from exponents of *falsafa*[482] and Safawid Shiʿism, Sunni scholars of the time sought to expound definitions of faith that would enable them to counter such challenges to their authority.[483]

This process of developing a robust Sunni definition of faith, however, involved a certain amount of conflict in the Sunni community itself, including in the discussions in al-Ghawrī's salons. Thus far, it might seem as if conflicting Ashʿarī and Māturīdī opinions were voiced alongside each other in the same *majlis* without comment or dispute; however, this was apparently the exception, not the rule. In fact, many of the pertinent questions in our sources focused directly on the differences between the two schools. Note the following dialogue:

> **Question:** "Is action included (*dākhil*) in faith?" This is a question that was posed by our lord the sultan—may God Most High perpetuate his rule.
> **Answer:** "In language, faith is *taṣdīq*. With regard to revelation (*sharʿ*), it is *taṣdīq* of the Prophet—God bless him and grant him salvation—in that which he is known to have brought.[484] Most people say, however,

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478 Hirschler, *Word* 67.

479 While Ḥanbalī legal views received limited attention in the *majālis*, our sources do not mention Ḥanbalī theological teachings. This might reflect the demographics of late Mamluk Cairo, where Ḥanbalīs were a small minority.

480 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 169–70.

481 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 170. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 1; Al-Tikriti, Voice, esp. 90–2.

482 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 169.

483 Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 179–81. See also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 162–3, 174.

484 For similar statements, see, e.g., al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 527; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 175.

that affirming [faith verbally] is necessary. Many of the righteous fore-fathers (*salaf*), however, say that [faith] is *taṣdīq*, affirmation, and action. Yet, [they also say], unlike the Muʿtazilīs, that one does not leave faith when one neglects action. [Moreover, they say], unlike the Khārijīs, that one does not enter into unbelief [when one neglects action], as long as one does not deny [faith]."[485]

Here the question at hand pertained directly to an issue that later Ottoman theologians counted among the major disagreements between Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs.[486] The author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* explicitly presented it as brought up by the sultan himself. The reply of his unnamed interlocutor was clearly informed by Ashʿarī teachings. He stated that faith was, first and fore-most, *taṣdīq* of the Prophet; thus, he gave the typical reply expected from an Ashʿarī after al-Ghazālī's time. He also argued that faith included verbal affirm-ation. Up to this point, Māturīdī theologians might have agreed with him, although most probably they would have put the emphasis differently. The anonymous responder's last point, however, clearly identifies him as an Ashʿarī: He says the *salaf* considered action a further part of faith, albeit not in the way the Muʿtazilīs or Khārijīs did. Here, the unnamed interlocutor positioned him-self against the Māturīdīs, who excluded action from the elements of faith.

The sources on the *majālis* show al-Ghawrī not only posing questions to the members of his *majālis*, but also, at times, taking a stand in theological contro-versies. Often, his positions can be identified with the teachings of a specific school. Note the following example:

Question: During the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet in the presence of His Noble Station [that is, the sultan], Qurqud Bek asked: "Does faith increase and decrease or does it not?"

Answer: His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "According to al-Shāfiʿī, [faith] increases and decreases. Abū Ḥanīfa, his followers, and many scholars, such as the Imām al-Ḥaramayn, rejected [this position] because [faith] is a term for *taṣdīq* that reaches the level of absolute certainty (*jazm*) and obedience (*idhʿān*), and it is inconceivable that there is decrease and increase in it. However, [the situation] is differ-ent if deeds of obedience (*ṭāʿāt*) are included. Therefore, *imām* al-Rāzī said 'The controversy derives from how faith is explained.'[487] The author

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485   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 269.

486   Badeen, *Theologie* 32–3.

487   Partially quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 211.

of *al-Mawāqif* (The stations) said: 'The truth is that faith undergoes increase and decrease depending on [its] strength and weakness. Your doctrine is: It is necessary for [faith] to be certain (*yaqīn*) and [it does not undergo any modulation because][488] modulation exists only when decrease (*naqīṣ*) is possible. We reply: We do not accept that there is modulation only when [decrease] is possible.[489] It is obvious that an overwhelming opinion which does not allow the opposite possibility to come to mind is with certainty to be considered true faith.'"[490]

According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the question discussed here was brought up under such circumstances that the sultan and those around him necessarily had to produce an answer. It was posed by none other than Qurqud Bek, son of the Ottoman sultan Bāyezīd II and possible heir to the Ottoman throne. Coming from a family known for its support of al-Māturīdī's school,[491] Qurqud demanded a statement from al-Ghawrī about an issue that was notoriously contested between this school and the Ashʿarīs.[492] He presented his question on a holiday that, as we saw, was of great importance for the religious and political life of the Mamluk court. Qurqud could not have found a more official and open communicative context in which to inquire where al-Ghawrī stood in this debate.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī's statement that Qurqud inquired about this issue at al-Ghawrī's court is highly credible, given what we know about the Ottoman prince's interests and his sojourn in Cairo. Qurqud was intimately familiar with Islamic religious scholarship in general and the *kalām* tradition in particular[493] and had come to Egypt, inter alia, to participate in scholarly exchanges.[494] Moreover, Qurqud authored an Arabic *kalām* treatise entitled *Ḥāfiẓ al-insān ʿan lāfiẓ al-īmān wa-Llāh al-hādī ilā ṣirāṭ al-jinān* (The human being's protector from the one who rejects faith: God guides to the path to paradise). This work consists of three parts: The first discusses the question of the definition of

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488   Not in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, supplemented from al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 542.

489   *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not include the proof of this statement, which follows in al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*.

490   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71, quoting al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 542–3.

491   Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 187; Rudolph, Entstehen 395–6; Madelung, Spread 109. See also Bruckmayr, Spread 66–70.

492   E.g., Badeen, *Theologie* 32–3.

493   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 7–8, 62, 332; Al-Tikriti, Voice, esp. 72–3, 81–91.

494   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 27–8. See also section 4.1.2.3 above.

faith and related problems,[495] while the second does the same for unbelief.[496] The final section enumerates external signs of unbelief that are of legal relevance.[497] The text relies heavily on works that were also referred to by our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*—works by authors such as al-Taftāzānī, al-Ījī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,[498] and builds on both al-Māturīdī's and al-Ashʿarī's thought.[499] We do not know exactly when Qurqud wrote this text, which was left unfinished and survives in what seems to be a draft copy lacking a colophon, but he seems to have conceived it by 913–4/1508 at the latest.[500] This suggests that the questions analyzed therein were on his mind when he left for the Mamluk domains in 914/1509. Moreover, Qurqud apparently wrote at least part of the text in light of his experiences in Egypt, as in two passages he referred to Egyptian scholars with whom he probably interacted directly.[501]

The first part of the text presents a detailed analysis of the constituents of faith and demonstrates that its author was very much interested in the same issues that were discussed in al-Ghawrī's salons. While Qurqud took both the Ashʿarī and the Māturīdī perspective seriously and discussed each at length, ultimately, he maintained that faith was primarily *taṣdīq* in the Prophet; this echoes the positions voiced by Ashʿarī scholars.[502] But he also asserted that *īmān* necessarily included verbal confirmation, whereas deeds constituted no part of faith, as the Māturīdīs taught.[503] Later in the same section, Qurqud dedicated almost seven folios to the question that *al-Kawkab al-durrī* attributes to him, that is, can faith increase and decrease.[504] Qurqud's reflections on this point are highly developed and complex, and it is not always clear in this passage whether he quotes the views of others or outlines his own position. In sum, however, Qurqud clearly argued that faith could increase and decrease,[505]

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495   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 2ʳ–88ᵛ, 96ʳ–105ʳ.

496   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 88ᵛ–95ᵛ, 105ʳ–161ᵛ.

497   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 161ᵛ–215ᵛ.

498   E.g., Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 9ʳ, 11ʳ, 20ʳ, 21ᵛ, 23ʳ, 24ᵛ, 25ᵛ, 39ᵛ. On Qurqud's familiarity with the works of these authors, see most recently Al-Tikriti, Voice, *passim*.

499   E.g., Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 2ᵛ–3ᵛ, 29ʳ, 31ᵛ, 34ᵛ, 41ʳ, 42ʳ, 49ᵛ. For Qurqud's familarity with and interest in Ashʿarī *kalām*, see Al-Tikriti, Voice 75, 83, 86–7, 95.

500   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 27. See also Al-Tikriti, Service 138; Al-Tikriti, Voice 82.

501   Cf. Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 27–8. See also Al-Tikriti, Voice 78.

502   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 2ʳ–2ᵛ. See also Al-Tikriti, Service 139.

503   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 2ʳ–9ᵛ, 12ᵛ–13ᵛ, 15ᵛ–17ᵛ, 21ʳ. See also Al-Tikriti, Service 140–1.

504   Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 57ᵛ–64ᵛ. See also fols. 96ʳ–98ʳ.

505   Cf. esp. Qurqud al-ʿUthmānī, *Ḥāfiẓ*, fols. 58ᵛ–59ʳ, 62ʳ. For the same conclusion, see also Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 168.

thus, he embraced a rather atypical position for Māturīdīs, as becomes clear shortly. Given this focus in his writings on the importance of actions for faith and the question of its possible decrease and increase, it seems very plausible that Qurqud discussed these topics with members of the Mamluk court.

For al-Ghawrī, the issue Qurqud raised was a sensitive one. Like the Ottoman ruling family, the sultan belonged to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and thus, almost necessarily also adhered to the Māturīdī school of theology—as did most members of the Mamluk military and some key civilian figures of his court.[506] The native inhabitants of Egypt and Syria, however, were mostly Ashʿarīs. When replying to this question, al-Ghawrī could not afford to begin an open conflict with his fellow Ḥanafīs by siding with the Ashʿarīs, nor would it have been wise to slight the native Ashʿarī religious establishment by rejecting their position out of hand.

The sultan's response, as it appears in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, is skillfully composed and one may doubt that it was indeed delivered in this form during the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, at least if the entire discussion was not prearranged. Nevertheless, the sultan's reply deserves our full attention, as *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, which was written by a member of the court society for the ruler, clearly presents it as the sultan's point of view. Hence, it can help us understand the sultan's religious policy.

According to the text, the sultan first showed that he was aware of the standard Ashʿarī position that faith could increase and decrease.[507] Without further elaboration, he immediately stated that others held the opposite opinion. Among the latter were Abū Ḥanifa and his Māturīdī followers, as well as adherents of other schools such as Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), the famous Ashʿarī *mutakallim* and teacher of al-Ghazālī.[508] Al-Ghawrī thus pointed to the fact that the standard Ashʿarī position was not unanimous, even among Ashʿarīs; thereby he considerably weakened this view without actually refuting it. This passage—including the reference to al-Juwaynī—was most probably based on a paragraph from al-Taftāzānī's

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506   Cf. section 4.2.1 above. See also Mauder, *Krieger* 116–7; Irwin, Eating 2. On the question of how much Ottoman *kalām* really reflected Māturīdī views toward the end of the middle period, see Al-Tikriti, Voice 68–9, 72.

507   Badeen, *Theologie* 32. See also Gardet, Īmān 1173; Gardet, Noms 92.

508   Brockelmann and Gardet, al-Ḏjuwaynī 605–6 (on al-Juwaynī); Badeen, *Theologie* 31–2; Madelung, al-Māturīdī 847; Izutsu, *Concept* 99–100, 192–3; (on the Māturīdī position). On the latter, see also Gardet, Īmān 1173; Gardet, Noms 91–2; Watt, Conception 5, 7; Watt, *Free Will* 119; van Ess, *Theologie* i, 195, 202; Wensinck, *Creed* 125, 138, 194, 229–230; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 38, 54, 73, 105, 129–30; Nagel, *Theologie* 110.

Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid that corresponded verbatim, in part, with the sultan's answer in our source.[509]

The next sentence was decisive. By stating that the situation "is different if deeds of obedience (*ṭāʿāt*) are included," al-Ghawrī distinguished between two situations. If, as the Māturīdīs said, faith was made up only of affirmation and *taṣdīq*, it would not change, since these elements were understood as invariable. However, if one included deeds in the definition of faith, one could no longer deny that it was subject to decrease and increase, as people might perform more or less deeds of faith during a certain time span than they did during another.[510] This differentiation was further emphasized by an appropriate quotation attributed to the famous scholar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, also included by al-Taftāzānī in his *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*.[511] Finally, the sultan showed his familiarity with the theological literature of his day by citing a relevant passage from al-Ījī's *Mawāqif* with explanatory additions by al-Jurjānī that presented the Ashʿarī position. This is noteworthy, in so far as al-Ījī wrote his *Mawāqif*, inter alia, in reaction to Māturīdī views.[512]

In his answer, as narrated in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the Mamluk ruler is presented as having achieved multiple goals at once. First, he showed that he was knowledgable about the different theological teachings current among Sunnis of his time and about the most important scholarly works in which these teachings could be found. Moreover, he suggested that in his view, the Māturīdī position, according to which faith did not decrease or increase, was more correct, since it was held not only by the followers of Abū Ḥanifa, but also by at least one high-profile Ashʿarī scholar. However, if one shared the mainstream Ashʿarī point of view that actions played a part in the definition of faith, indeed, one had to assume that faith underwent change. What the sultan—most probably very consciously—was not reported to have stated was that for him, as an adherent of the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī position, the entire idea that actions could be a part of faith was erroneous.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī does not include any information on how the sultan's reply was received by Qurqud or any of the Ashʿarīs present at the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, if it was, indeed, delivered in the form narrated. However, it seems plausible that the ruler's well balanced statement would not have annoyed either of the two parties.

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509   Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 211. On this issue, see also al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 115–6.

510   Izutsu, *Concept* 179–85, 192–3.

511   Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 211.

512   Eichner, Handbooks 495–6, 508–9.

A passage in our sources that deals with a more exclusive context than the celebration of the Prophet's *mawlid* suggests that the sultan definitely favored the standard Māturīdī position. In a *majlis* held in early Muḥarram 911/June 1505, the sultan answered the question—this time posed anonymously— whether faith increased and decreased. He is presented as giving the clear and unambiguous reply that, according to Abū Ḥanifa's followers, it did not. Moreover, his answer ends with a statement regarding those who did not belong to the educated elite, which most probably encompasses here primarily Ḥanafī scholars, namely, that "they deserve no attention" (*fa-lā ʿibrata bihim*).[513] When seen in comparison, the two passages on the question whether faith can increase and decrease clearly demonstrate that for al-Ghawrī and those around him, different statements about matters of religious doctrine appeared to be appropriate in different communicative contexts, depending on who participated in or could overhear their discussions.

The following statement attributed to the sultan again shows him leaning toward Māturīdī points of view:

First Question: Our lord the sultan said: "What are the organs of faith (*aʿḍāʾ al-īmān*)?"

Answer: I said: "The heart and the tongue, because faith is *taṣdīq* with the heart and affirmation with the tongue."

Second Question: Shaykh ʿAbd al-Razzāq said: "Does one know God through the heart (*bi-l-qalb*) or through revelation (*bi-l-naql*)?"

Answer: I said: "The scholars do not express the opinion that one knows God by means of the heart. It is obvious that this [latter view] is wrong. For if [this kind of] knowledge (*maʿrifa*) is said to depend on the heart, then all of the speechless animals, the little children, and all of the insane would necessarily be obligated to observe the precepts of religion, because they have hearts, [too]. This is not the case. Rather, it is said that the knowledge of God Most High is mandatory either by means of revelation (*sharʿan*) or reason (*ʿaqlan*).

I say: According to the Ḥanafīs, it is mandatory by means of reason, as is shown by His statement 'Have they not thought about ...[514] the creation of the heavens and earth'[515] [Q 30:8]. According to the Shāfiʿīs, it is

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513   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 58.
514   Elision in the original.
515   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly adjusted.

mandatory by means of revelation, as is shown by 'Nor do We punish […]'
[Q 17:15] till the end of the verse."

> **Third Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "The statement of the one who
> says that knowledge of God is mandatory by means of revelation [must]
> also take reason into account, since knowledge of the prophets and the
> objects of religious obligation (*taklīf*) [is attained] by reason [alone].
> 'Whoever does not have reason does not have a religion'[516] and is not
> obligated to observe the precepts of religion."[517]

The basic question underlying this conversation concerns the basis on which
one must recognize the existence of God and believe in Him. According to
Ashʿarīs, faith becomes incumbent upon humans only if and when God sends
them a prophet with a revelation (*sharʿ*) about His existence. One of the com-
mon arguments for this view is the last part of Q 17:15: "Nor do We punish until
We have sent a messenger." Here, according to the Ashʿarī understanding, God
declared that humans would only be punished for their unbelief if a prophet's
teachings had reached them. Thus, the recognition of God becomes obligatory
only "by means of revelation" (*sharʿan*).[518]

The Māturīdīs objected to this, and stated that God has provided humans
with the ability to learn about His existence even without revelation. By means
of reason (*ʿaql*), human beings could and were obliged to find out for them-
selves that God must exist, given that creation was full of signs pointing toward
the Creator. Since humans could and should reflect upon God's creation (cf.
Q 30:8), they were under the obligation to know Him, even without a prophet's
message.[519]

While the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* reports both
positions with the respective Quranic proof texts in an uncommitted man-
ner, he depicts the sultan clearly expressing that the Māturīdī position was
more convincing, as even Ashʿarīs had to admit that ultimately, one could not
recognize a prophet and know about his message without reason. Therefore,

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516   The standard Sunni collections do not include this *ḥadīth*. On its evaluation in Muslim
       scholarship, see, e.g., Laḥjī, *Muntahā* iii, 422.

517   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 98–99; (ed. ʿAzzām) 27 (incomplete). The last statement is not
       phrased as a question, nor does an answer follow.

518   Cf. Izutsu, *Concept* 110–1, 115. See also Badeen, *Theologie* 18, 23, 27, 64; Rudolph, Ratio 74–8.

519   Izutsu, *Concept* 109–12, 116–7. See also Badeen, *Theologie* 18, 23, 27, 64; Madelung, al-
       Māturīdī 846; Rudolph, Ratio 78–85; van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 327. For Qurqud's views on
       this question, see Al-Tikriti, Service 141; and for the broader Mamluk context of the debate
       Griffel, Ibn Taymiyya.

although revelation might constitute the proximate cause for faith in God, reason remained necessary to attain it.[520]

The decisive role accorded to reason in the sultan's statement fits well with what Ulrich Rudolph identified as a general tendency in al-Māturīdī's thought, namely, that he was willing to concede to reason a much broader "field of activity" (*Freiraum*)[521] than al-Ashʿarī was. In particular, al-Māturīdī had much more confidence in the human rational abilities to recognize God and to undertake ethical evaluations.[522]

The controversy between Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs over the respective roles of reason and revelation had received considerable attention prior to al-Ghawrī's reign and continued to do so until late Ottoman times.[523] Of primary importance in this context was a poem by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī known as the *Nūniyya*[524] since each of its verses ended with the letter *nūn*. In the poem, the Ashʿarī author listed thirteen points on which Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs—or "Ḥanafīs" in his parlance—disagreed. According to him, seven of these differences were only "terminological" (*lafẓī*), whereas the six remaining ones constituted disagreement in "terms of content" (*maʿnawī*).[525] Among the latter, al-Subkī included, as one of the most prominent issues, the question whether reason or revelation was decisive (*ḥākim*) in the recognition of God.[526]

Al-Kawkab al-durrī offers a second, similar account of the discussion of this issue in the sultan's *majālis*:

> **Question:** "[Imagine] a deaf, mute, and blind person who grew up on the top of a mountain, and whom the call of a prophet did not reach. He does not know things (*umūr*), rules (*aḥkām*), and names (*asmāʾ*) and does not have someone else who points out anything to him. Is [such a person] obligated to observe the precepts of religion (*mukallaf*) or not?"
>
> **Answer:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Reflecting (*naẓar*) upon the knowledge of God Most High is mandatory according to Abū

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520   See also Izutsu, *Concept* 117–8.

521   Rudolph, Ratio 86.

522   Rudolph, Ratio 86. See also Rudolph, Tradition 288.

523   Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 5–6, 358; Rudolph, Entstehen 399–400 (on early controversies); Badeen, *Theologie* 23, 27 (on Ottoman times).

524   On al-Subkī and his work, see Badeen, *Theologie* 10–3.

525   Al-Subkī, *Nūniyya*, in Badeen, *Theologie* 15 (Arabic section, both quotations). Cf. Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 8–9; Badeen, *Theologie* 14–9 (on the *Nūniyya*); 1–18 (Arabic section; edition of the poem).

526   Al-Subkī, *Nūniyya*, in Badeen, *Theologie* 15 (Arabic section).

Ḥanifa through reason (*bi-l-ʿaql*) and according to al-Shāfiʿī through revelation (*bi-l-samʿ*).

[The Ḥanafīs] conclude this from the statement[s] of Him Most High 'Say, Look at what is in the heavens and on the earth' [Q 10:101], [...] 'Look, then, at the imprints of God's mercy, how He restores the earth to life after death' [Q 30:50], and [...] 'in the creation of the heavens and earth' [Q 3:190] till the end of this verse. The evidence of the Shāfiʿīs is 'Nor do We punish until We have sent a messenger' [Q 17:15].'"

His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Whoever claims that the necessity to know God comes from revelation [only] must take into account that the knowledge of its necessity [is attained] through reason (*bi-l-ʿaql*). For whoever does not reflect rationally upon the miracles of the prophets cannot establish the prophethood of a prophet, since revelation (*naql*) can only be accepted by means of reason.

But if (*fa-law*) [knowledge of God] were mandatory by means of reason (*bi-l-ʿaql*) [alone], then [this knowledge] would have [already] been established [by means of reason] before [a prophet] was sent, and this is impossible."[527]

Here, the question about the respective roles of revelation and reason was addressed in the form of a thought experiment: Were people who could not have received revelation obliged to recognize God and obey religious precepts? The sultan's reply first presented the two positions and their respective evidence known to us from the previously analyzed account: In the Ashʿarī view, such people were exempted from religious obligations since they did not have access to revelation. The Māturīdīs, however, held that even such people could and indeed had to recognize God by means of reason.[528]

After introducing these views, the sultan makes the same point that is recorded in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*: If one argued that knowledge of God was necessary by means of revelation, one must pay attention to the fact that without reason, one could not accept any revelation as genuine, for reason is how people confirm that a given person is a prophet. Thereafter, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* shows al-Ghawrī adding a new and somewhat surprising point: Just as one had to acknowledge that reason was necessary to discern true revelation, reason alone could not be a sufficient source for knowledge of God. If it were,

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527   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 257–8. The last paragraph quotes al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 163.

528   In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, it was not the sultan, but the first-person narrator who expounded these points of view.

prophecy and revelation would be superfluous since its contents had already been established by reason before any prophetic revelation was sent down.

The source of the final statement was a passage from al-Jurjānī's commentary on al-Ījī's *Mawāqif* which, as seen, figured prominently in late Mamluk theological literature. In this particular passage, al-Jurjānī dealt with what he described as the Muʿtazilī position, according to which reason made the recognition of God mandatory.[529] Against this position, al-Jurjānī argued, based on Q 17:15 ("Nor do We punish until We have sent a messenger") that God would punish humans only after he had sent them a prophet with a revelation. However, if humans could attain knowledge of God by reason alone, without revelation, they would be obliged to do so, even if a prophet's message had never reached them. "Therefore, it would be necessary for them to be punished [for not recognizing God] before [revelation was sent down to them], and this is ruled out by the Quranic verse (*bāṭil bi-l-āya*)."[530]

According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the sultan quoted a sentence from this argument by al-Jurjānī verbatim to demonstrate that unlike the standard Māturīdī view, reason alone could not be the source of knowledge about God. Clearly, al-Ghawrī wanted to find a way to integrate the otherwise conflicting Ashʿarī and Māturīdī positions on what al-Subkī considered one of the most important dogmatic issues of contention between the two schools. In the final view the sultan presented, reason was necessary to ascertain the veracity of revelation, but could not replace it.

Thus far, our sources present all the passages from the *majālis* texts analyzed in this section as the result of oral communication. Yet, the theological questions about the concept of faith were so important—or so complex—that at times they called for a more detailed treatment. The following example of such a comprehensive exposition of a specific topic is noteworthy not only for its theological content, but also for its literary value and political message. The text is translated here in full to allow for a better assessment of its overall structure and character. Slashes indicate the end of verses written in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) as marked in the manuscript:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Is the faith which is *taṣdīq* something that must be reflected upon (*naẓarī*) and requires thinking (*fikr*), or [is it] something self-evident (*badīhī*), meaning that it does not require reflection (*naẓar*) and acquisition (*kasb*)?"

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529 Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 147–8.

530 Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 163. Cf. al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ*, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 163 for the entire passage.

Answer: The chief judge of the world, / the authority of Islam among Arabs and non-Arabs / the example of the leading masters, / the *qibla* of the scholars throughout the world, / the *shaykh*, the perfection (*kamāl*) of the religious community, of the religious law, of the truth, of piety, of legal opinions, and of religion, Muḥammad al-Qādirī, / may God perpetuate his days, said:

"Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, and blessing and peace be upon Muḥammad, the lord of those who have been sent, / as well as upon his kinsfolk and his Companions altogether. / Now to the content: This is a delicate (*laṭīfa*) question that was mentioned in the noble presence / of His Excellency our lord, the greatest *imām*, / the glorious and elevated / who surpasses the rulers of the age by his deeds and excels over them by the faultlessness of his thinking and the sharpness of his understanding. / If problems are mentioned in front of him, he promptly solves them (*bādara ilā ḥallihā*) / and when puzzles (*muʿḍilāt*) are submitted to him, he explains them to those to whom they pertain (*li-ahlihā*). How many important lessons (*fāʾida*) has he conveyed, and how many unprecedented aperçus (*nukta*) has he disclosed and recounted? / His salons are crowded with the excellent, / no one is pleased without his company. / God, let him become [even] greater in knowledge, good fortune, and clemency, / perpetuate through him the benefit of humankind and through his presence remedy the corruption of the lands, amen, oh Lord of the worlds.

According to one of the *shaykh*s, faith is something that is acquired (*kasbī*), it is maintained through the will of the believer (*bi-ikhtiyār al-muṣaddiq*). Therefore, there is reward for it.[531] One of the masters applied himself to this and doubted that *taṣdīq* is one of the parts of knowledge (*ʿilm*). Knowledge belongs to the group of qualities (*kayfiyyāt*) of the soul, not to the [group of] voluntary (*ikhtiyāriyya*) actions.[532] Thus, it is not correct to interpret it as a voluntary action according to their doctrine that *taṣdīq* means that you attribute truthfulness (*ṣidq*) by means of your will to a person who reports something.[533]

The doctrine of a certain *shaykh* is that *taṣdīq* is an expression for the [act of] binding (*rabṭ*) the heart to the information known from the one bearing it.[534] It includes [the meaning] that attaining this quality is done

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531   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117.
532   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117.
533   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117.
534   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117.

by an act of free will, by applying oneself to [its] causes in terms of the free exercise of rational inquiry, the overcoming of impediments, etc.[535] According to this approach, there is a religious obligation (*taklīf*) to have faith.[536] But if a religious obligation pertains [only] to voluntary matters and the qualities of the soul do not belong to the voluntary matters, then a religious obligation regarding them means that there is a religious obligation to apply oneself to the causes of attaining them, and this is [what is] meant by [the doctrine] that [faith] is something voluntary that underlies acquisition.

If faith were an action, then it would be right to ascribe it only to those who continuously [?][537] occupy themselves [with it] and attain [it], because this kind of accident (*'araḍ*) does not last according to the philosophers, unlike a [lasting] quality (*kayf*) [of the soul]. It is well known that it has not been made obligatory to attain this quality [that is, faith] constantly by way of performing an action. Rather, revelation deemed the existence of it [that is, faith] constant as long as nothing occurs that contradicts it—apart from heedlessness occurring during sleep or something else.[538] Yet, the commentator of the *Maqāṣid* leaned toward the continuity of the accident since he affirmed confidently that the faith that we have now is exactly the same faith that we have had before."[539]

The complexity of this argumentation warrants a detailed analysis. Its starting point was a question brought up by the sultan: Is the *taṣdīq* element in faith something that presupposes reflection (*naẓar*) and thinking (*fikr*)? Or is it not based on reflection, but comes to humans immediately, such that they do not have to actively acquire it?

The terminology used in this question can be traced back to early Islamic epistemological discussions in which knowledge was understood as belonging to two categories: First, spontaneous (*ibtidāʾī*) and necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge that comes about without effort; and second, knowledge that is acquired (*iktisābī*) through volitional acts (sg. *ikhtiyār*) and reflection (*naẓar*). The first kind of knowledge includes not only what is based on sense perception, but

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535   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117.

536   Quoting al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 117. On the entire passage, see also Izutsu, *Concept* 137–8.

537   This word is illegible in the manuscript.

538   On this issue, see al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 112; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 182.

539   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (ms) 125–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38–41. The last sentence refers to al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* 112–3.

also what humans know as self-evident (*badīha*), without intellectual effort.[540] Since humans do not have to do anything to acquire this kind of knowledge, it is meaningless to say that they are obliged to do so. However, with regard to the second kind of knowledge that is acquired through human actions, it makes sense to speak about religious obligations (sg. *taklīf*). In particular, early Muslim thinkers argued that humans are obliged to acquire knowledge of God.[541]

Underlying this last doctrine is the Sunni theory of acquisition, developed to explain the relationship between human beings and their actions. Early Ashʿarī theologians taught that while God creates all actions, humans make voluntary actions their own by means of a power that God creates in them when they perform their actions. This process of "acquisition" (*kasb* or *iktisāb*) allowed Ashʿarī theologians to consider humans the real agents of their actions without compromising God's omnipotence.[542]

In his reply, Muḥammad al-Qādirī built on these earlier teachings, especially in his terminology. The idea that *taṣdīq* could be based on self-evident knowledge apparently made no sense to him, since he did not write about this possibility at all. Rather, he began with the statement that according to one opinion, faith was acquired (*kasbī*) and continued to exist in humans because of their will. Accordingly, believers are rewarded for the acquisition of faith, as they fulfil a religious obligation.

As Muḥammad al-Qādirī pointed out, an unnamed scholar had objected to this explanation, because it suggested that *taṣdīq* was a kind of knowledge. According to this objection, qualities of the soul (such as knowledge) on the one hand and voluntary actions on the other hand constituted separate categories. Therefore, *taṣdīq* could not be both a voluntary action and a kind of knowledge. What remained unsaid was that religious obligations could only pertain to voluntary actions. Thus, if one held that there was a religious obligation to have faith, one had to prove that faith was indeed a voluntary action, or at the least, that it was somehow related to one.

To deal with this objection, Muḥammad al-Qādirī introduced a second, more complex explanation, one that relied heavily on al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*.

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540   Van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 666–7. See also van Ess, *Theologie* ii, 269, 381; iv, 361; v, 454 for further meanings of the root *b-d-h*. On the differentiation between necessary and acquired knowledge in later *kalām*, see Eichner, *Tradition* 181–6.

541   Van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 667–9. See also van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre* 416–7.

542   Berger, *Theologie* 82; Griffel, *Theology* 217. On this theory and *īmān*, see Izutsu, *Concept* 120, 137; van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 668–9.

In this alternative model, *taṣdīq* was understood as coming about through voluntary actions that occasioned a corresponding quality of the soul, that is, knowledge. These voluntary actions included the performance of rational inquiry. Since knowledge—like all other qualities of the soul—could not be the object of a religious obligation (*taklīf*), the obligation to have faith did not pertain to this quality directly. Rather, there was a religious obligation to perform the actions that brought it about. In this indirect sense, one could say that faith was voluntarily acquired.[543]

With this explanation, Muḥammad al-Qādirī also addressed the problem that if faith was an action, one would cease to be a believer as soon as one did something else. However, as al-Qādirī argued, faith was brought about by certain actions, but also constituted a state of the soul that continued to be present even if one did not continually perform the acts that caused it. Rather, it persisted as long as one did not do something that opposed it. Finally, al-Qādirī noted that there was a slight disagreement on this point between him and al-Taftāzānī.

Our sources do not indicate how Muḥammad al-Qādirī's analysis of the relationship between *taṣdīq* and *naẓar* became part of the sultan's salons or their accounts. Given its artistic language and rich detail, it was certainly not produced on an ad hoc basis. Rather, al-Qādirī must have prepared the text in writing and then submitted it to the sultan's circle. The author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* apparently cited it from a written copy. However, especially the long and flowery introductory passage that glorified the sultan and his rule would have been most effective if performed orally, in the sultan's *majlis*. Therefore, we may assume that Muḥammad al-Qādirī used both oral and written communication to submit his work. Most probably, he offered the sultan a manuscript of his text—either directly or via an intermediary—which was then read aloud. The fact that we know of similar practices with regard to the presentation of other works to Mamluk rulers lends further credibility to this assumption.[544]

The possibility that texts such as the one by Muḥammad al-Qādirī were first laid down in writing is further corroborated by what we know about another long discussion of a theological question in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. A passage directly preceding al-Qādirī's text reads:

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543   On the difference between qualities of the soul and actions with regard to faith, see also al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* v, 184. On *taṣdīq* as deliberate action, see also Frank, Knowledge 42.

544   Holt, Offerings 16. See also Holt, Offerings 3–4.

Question: "Is faith created or uncreated?"

[…] The greatest *imām*, the example of humankind throughout the world, I mean Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf wrote (*kataba*) the following noble answer after having applied himself to this [question].[545]

In this case, the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* clearly stated that Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf, one of the most prominent members of the sultan's *majālis*,[546] had responded in writing to a question brought up in the sultan's salons. As we see below, he had recourse to a number of written sources in his reflection on whether faith was created or uncreated—another prominent point of contention between Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs.

After a long *khuṭba* focused on the topic of God giving different levels of insight to different people, Ibn Abī Sharīf explained why he had authored his text:

Answer: "[…] Something that does not please the listener has reached [our] ears. / Someone related statements of the *imām*s about something that the scholars of the community do not want to become widespread, / since it should reach only those who have firmly established insight, / for someone who might seek to comprehend it might commit an error in understanding its meaning / and plunge into the seas of confusion (*ḥayra*). [Yet,] no one who saw him [that is, the aforementioned person spreading this doctrine] argued with him.

He quoted a statement (*maqāla*) made by one of the Ḥanafī *shaykh*s, although he realized that all of the truly insightful [people] had rejected it. / [The statement was] that faith was not created (*makhlūq*), but eternal (*qadīm*). / Yet, the one who holds that [faith] is created in time (*qāla bi-ḥudūthihi*) has the correct understanding. / [The latter] fears for [the former, that his view that faith is eternal constitutes] unbelief (*yukhshā ʿalayhi al-kufr*). / Spreading this [latter] doctrine widely is one of the severest forms of ignorance."[547]

According to Ibn Abī Sharīf, an unnamed person had openly spread the teaching of a Ḥanafī scholar who said that faith was eternal. Thus, in Ibn Abī Sharīf's view, the anonymous man had divulged to a broad audience things that should not be disclosed, since they might lead to misunderstandings and confusion

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545   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 122; (ed. ʿAzzām) 35.
546   On his biography, see section 4.1.2.2 above.
547   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 123–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 36.

among non-specialists. Moreover, the position that faith was uncreated was not only rejected by all leading scholars, but might even qualify as *kufr*.

Ibn Abī Sharīf then set out to refute the problematic position:

> In his testament (*waṣīya*) which he made known during his final illness and which people heard [directly] from him, Abū Ḥanīfa—may God be pleased with him—said after people had asked him [about this topic]: 'We confess that a human being and all of his actions, as well as all of what he affirms and knows is created.'[548] He proclaimed that it is preceded by nonexistence (*masbūq bi-l-ʿadam*) and cannot be described as eternal. / Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī postponed to the final part of his discussion what he could have said earlier in order to remove (*nafy*) the disagreement that had been brought about.
>
> I say: Whoever examines and connects to its origins (*mawāriduhu*) what has been said / distinguishes between the two circumstances in which the question appears. / As for the [kind of] faith that is affirmation with the tongue / *taṣdīq* with the heart, and action with the limbs /—and all of these are human actions—, / only stubborn and pigheaded people deny that it is created in time. / As for the [kind of] faith that is an attribute of God, to which His name 'the Believer (*al-Muʾmin*)' [Q 59:23][549] points, / the one who holds the doctrine that it is eternal is right and is perfect / meaning that he believes in what God has confirmed—[namely] 'There is no god but Me'—and affirms His oneness. It is beyond controversy that this is not a matter of dispute nor is there room [for a dispute]. The one who says that this [latter kind of faith] is created in time is outside the religious community (*khārij ʿan al-milla*).
>
> The controversy at the root of this question is not peculiar to the Ḥanafīs, rather al-Ashʿarī gives an account of the controversy among others in a separate treatise that is transmitted to us authoritatively (*bi-l-ijāza*). / Among the rational theologians (*ahl al-naẓar*) who ventured to hold the doctrine that faith is created are [al-]Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb, ʿAbdallāh Ibn Kullāb and other groups.[550] The doctrine that it is eternal was voiced by the *imām* Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and a group of the scholars of *ḥadīth* (*ahl al-ḥadīth*)[551] who hold him in high esteem. The

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548 (Pseudo-)Abū Ḥanīfa, *Waṣīya* 45.

549 My translation.

550 Quoting al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 138.

551 Quoting al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 138.

imām al-Ashʿarī leaned toward it, and everyone spoke in accordance with his interpretation.[552]

The first argument that our author adduced took the form of a quotation from the famous text known as the testament of Abū Ḥanīfa, of which al-Ghawrī's library held a copy.[553] The quotation clearly rejected the possibility that faith—as well as everything else that a human being knew and did—could be uncreated.[554] While the testament was most certainly not written by Abū Ḥanīfa himself,[555] many of his followers, including Muḥammad al-Māturīdī, accepted the views voiced therein.[556]

Then why did Ibn Abī Sharīf's unnamed opponent refer to a Ḥanafī scholar to support his claim that faith was uncreated? Indeed, the situation among the Ḥanafī-Māturīdīs was more complicated than the clear-cut statement from the testament of Abū Ḥanīfa might suggest. Some early Ḥanafī authorities subscribed to what Ulrich Rudolph called a "compromise"[557] position. According to this view, which became predominant among later Māturīdīs, faith consisted of two parts: One included human *taṣdīq* and the affirmation of faith, that is, created human actions. The second part pertained to the uncreated attributes of God, who granted humans the ability to recognize (*taʿrīf*) Him, came to their aid, and provided them with a formula to profess their faith, namely, the *shahāda*. Therefore, one could speak of human faith as partially created and partially uncreated.[558]

Ibn Abī Sharīf, who although a Shāfiʿī had not only studied Ashʿarī *kalām*, but also Ḥanafī-Māturīdī thought,[559] demonstrated his familiarity with this view and the relevant Ḥanafī-Māturīdī literature through his comment that "Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī postponed to the final part of his discussion what he could have said earlier." This somewhat enigmatic statement is a reference to the work known as *Kitāb al-Samarqandī* by the Ḥanafī scholar Abū l-Layth al-Samarqandī. It addresses twenty-seven questions on various aspects of Islamic

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552 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 124–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 37–8.

553 MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Bağdat Köşkü 112 [non vidi] (see Karatay, *Arapça yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 6).

554 On this passage, see also Wensinck, *Creed* 128, 152.

555 Wensinck, *Creed* 185–7; Daiber in al-Samarqandī, *Belief* 1. On this work, see also Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* 140–1.

556 Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 235, 346–8. See also Izutsu, *Concept* 210–1.

557 Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 347. Cf. Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 347–8.

558 Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 123, 347. See also Izutsu, *Concept* 212.

559 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* 134–5.

creed.[560] The very first questions pertain to the definition of faith; thus, one might expect the question whether faith is created to be dealt with directly thereafter. However, al-Samarqandī discussed this question only at the very end of his work. There, he presented a slightly different version of the compromise position:

> If you are asked whether the faith that has been referred to [above] is cre-
> ated or uncreated, then say: Faith is [at the same time] guidance (*hidāya*)
> from God Most High as well as *taṣdīq* with the heart, and affirmation
> with the tongue. [Both of the latter] are human actions. The guidance is
> uncreated, because it is a favor (*ṣunʿ*) of the Lord who is eternal. *Taṣdīq*
> and affirmation belong to the actions of humans who are created, [but]
> everything that comes from the Eternal is [also] eternal.[561]

This compromise position aimed to end a long-lasting dispute. Ibn Abī Sharīf mentioned some of its key participants: Thinkers who emphasized the roles of reason in theological matters, such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb (d. 236/850), and ʿAbdallāh Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855) held that faith was created, whereas Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and others argued against rational inquiry in matters of faith and considered faith eternal.[562]

Ibn Abī Sharīf counted al-Ashʿarī among those who "leaned toward" this second position. The founder of the Ashʿarī school laid down his views on the uncreatedness of *īmān* in his short *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*[563]—the "separate treatise" Ibn Abī Sharīf mentioned. In it, al-Ashʿarī first outlined the positions of various theologians. A comparison of this passage with Ibn Abī Sharīf's text shows that the latter was based in part on al-Ashʿarī's *Risāla*.[564]

After his outline of past debates, al-Ashʿarī presented his own point of view and affirmed that faith is uncreated:

> If we would say that [faith] is created, we would affirm that it was not
> existent before it was created. Thus, there would have been no faith and
> no profession of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) during the state that preceded and

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560 On this work, see Juynboll, Catechismus; Schmidtke, Theologie 182.

561 Al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb al-Samarqandī*, ed. in Juynboll, Catechismus, 274. See also Izutsu, *Concept* 211–3.

562 On the early Islamic debates associated with these figures, see Izutsu, *Concept* 204–7.

563 Al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 138–40. On this treatise, which is generally accepted as authentic, see also Izutsu, *Concept* 207–10; Gimaret, Bibliographie 270.

564 See the notes in Ibn Abī Sharīf's text for the corresponding passages in al-Ashʿarī.

predated the creation [of faith]. This doctrine is obviously wrong. Rather, we say that there was never any state whatsoever that was devoid of faith in God or the profession of His unity, be it before the creation of humankind or after it.[565]

Yet, how could there be faith without believers (sg. *muʾmin*) and who had faith before humankind came into being? According to al-Ashʿarī, God Himself was and always had been *muʾmin*, as confirmed in Q 59:23:

> He is God: there is no god other than Him, the Controller, the Holy One, Source of Peace, *al-muʾmin*, Guardian over all, the Almighty, the Compeller, the Truly Great; God is far above anything they consider to be His partner.[566]

In al-Ashʿarī's view, this Quranic verse proved that faith (*īmān*) "was included among the attributes of God Most High"[567] and therefore necessarily uncreated.[568]

The clarity of al-Ashʿarī's reasoning in this text notwithstanding, later Ashʿarīs adopted a different view. They argued that on the one hand, there was an eternal kind of *īmān* belonging to God, according to Q 59:23, as al-Ashʿarī taught. On the other hand, human *īmān* depended on human actions and was thus created.[569] Later Ashʿarīs thereby arrived at a compromise solution that closely resembled the one to which most later Māturīdīs subscribed, although the two schools reached these solutions from diametrically opposed starting points.

In his discussion of the problem, Ibn Abī Sharīf adhered to the Ashʿarī compromise model, as was typical for a Shāfiʿī scholar. He declared that the faith that consisted of affirmation, *taṣdīq*, and action was created in time, like all other human actions. However, Q 59:23 showed that there was also an uncreated kind of faith that constituted an attribute of God. Ibn Abī Sharīf apparently considered this compromise formula also acceptable to his Māturīdī peers, as he affirmed that it was not a matter of dispute. At the same time, he was ready

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565   Al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 139.

566   Trans. Abdel Haleem. Abdel Haleem's "the Granter of Security" has been replaced with the original Arabic.

567   Al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 139.

568   Al-Ashʿarī, *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*, ed. in Spitta, *Geschichte* 139. On Ashʿarī authors' understanding of this verse, see Gardet, Īmān 1172–3; Gardet, Noms 65–7.

569   Izutsu, *Concept* 210.

to defend it against anyone who rejected the teaching that the kind of faith to which Q 59:23 pointed was eternal. To Ibn Abī Sharīf, arguing against its eternality meant that one stood outside the Muslim community.

Possibly in light of the past violent conflicts between Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs and the theological differences between the foreign Mamluk elite and the local population, the Shāfiʿī judge concluded his statement as follows:

> Whoever among the people of this community thinks that there should be a charge of unbelief (*takfīr*) [against anyone who holds a different view in this matter] goes far astray and there is no source for his doctrine. God forbid that those / to which people refer as authorities in religion charge each other with unbelief (*yukaffiru baʿḍuhum baʿḍ*). This [would be] a hazardous endeavor and slander against them. God granted the *imām*s knowledge that is both inward and outward. Because the outward was easy for them, everyone followed them with regard to it. / He made His affair easy for them[570] / with regard to dispensing justice and delivering legal opinions out of affection for the righteous (*min maḥabbat al-abirra*).[571] / [Why] would they not imitate Abū Ḥanīfa in his piety, in his renunciation of sleep, and in spending the night in prayer?—[For] he used to pray the morning prayer with the [same] ritual ablution [as] the evening prayer for forty years. / Their concerns would be elevated and they would be close to the other world, / being the people most detached from paying heed to the entanglements of this world. / This is the condition in which the *imām*s remained, fearful [of God] and painstakingly proceeding with the taming of their soul and the examination of their conscience.[572]

Ibn Abī Sharīf's explicit praise of the eponym of a rival school of law, that is, Abū Ḥanīfa, and his warnings against any accusations of unbelief or even full-fledged *takfīr* can be understood as his conscious attempt to prevent open conflict between Ḥanafī-Māturīdīs and Ashʿarīs in the Mamluk Sultanate.[573] As a high-ranking official and member of the sultan's court, he advocated a position of accommodation and harmonization between the varying theological positions. To this end, as we saw, he replied to the question whether faith was created in a manner that he considered acceptable to both Sunni schools.

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570 Cf. Q 65:4.

571 Here I follow the manuscript and not the edition that has *maḥabbat al-imra*.

572 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 125; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38.

573 For the custom of praising the *madhhab* eponyms' ethical qualities, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 67.

Moreover, he explicitly denounced the rather common practice of his contemporary scholarly peers of accusing each other of unbelief on theological grounds.[574]

These last observations lead us to five broader conclusions about religious life in the late Mamluk period that we can glean from the theological discussions about faith in the sultan's salons:

First, scholarly discussions about *kalām* topics apparently took place within the walls of the citadel; this has noteworthy implications in the context of scholarly religious communication during the late middle period. As Lutz Berger suggested, being proficient in *kalām* discussions was an important advantage for scholars of the Mamluk period who strived for recognition of their academic qualifications.[575] The *majālis* participants demonstrated their familiarity with the tradition of *kalām* by quoting from standard works such as al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*, or al-Jurjānī's commentary on al-Ījī's *Mawāqif*, or from more specialized treatises like al-Ashʿarī's *al-Risāla fī l-Īmān*. Moreover, they showcased their theological knowledge through short texts that dealt with controversial questions, such as the createdness of faith, and by contributing to ongoing theological disputes, including the question whether Pharaoh was a believer. Apparently, al-Ghawrī's salons constituted a venue for meaningful contributions to Mamluk discursive religious communication.

Second, our sources portray Sultan al-Ghawrī not only as the convener, but also as an active participant in these discussions, although it must be acknowledged that the sultan's competence in *kalām* was, even according to our sources, limited to a familiarity with standard textbooks. Together with the observation that two independent sources contain similar, though not identical versions of the sultan's contribution to the debate on the significance of reason and revelation for human faith, this strongly suggests that the ruler was indeed actively involved in debates about *kalām* questions. Nevertheless, we must also bear in mind the limitations of our sources in terms of the reconstruction of the exact proceedings of the debates in which the sultan participated, as the profound discrepancies between the two accounts of the debate about reason and revelation clearly show.

This image of the sultan actively engaging in *kalām* discussions stands in marked contrast to the usual role of rulers of the late middle and early modern periods. As Lutz Berger pointed out, rulers of this time—unlike, for example, their early ʿAbbasid or Fatimid predecessors—"refrained from interfering in

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574   Ormsby, *Theodicy* 117; Sartain, *Biography* 131. On the spread of *takfīr* in Mamluk times, see
         Levanoni, Egypt.
575   Berger, Interpretations 701.

the business of theologians."[576] The fact that, according to our sources, al-Ghawrī did intervene in the ongoing theological disputes of his time leads us to conclude that these debates were relevant to him as a Muslim ruler.

Third, the content of these discussions was a possible reason for the remarkable relevance these discussions had for the sultan and those around him. As our analysis of debates about the concept of *īmān* showed, the participants in the *majālis* paid particular attention to controversial questions on which Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs differed. Yet, they did not, for example, discuss subjects of dispute between the Ash'ariyya and messianic Shi'ism that was flourishing in Safawid territory even as the *majālis* took place. Their focus on the differences between the two Sunni schools was a result of the demographic structure and the governing system of the Mamluk Sultanate. As mentioned, the population of the realm predominantly adhered to the Ash'arī creed, while its military rulers, together with a rather small group of Ḥanafī civilians, generally followed al-Māturīdī's teachings. The Seljuq period bore witness to how such theological differences could become focal points of intercommunal strife and unrest. Moreover, as Stephennie Mulder showed, even in Mamluk times, such "debates were not merely academic, for there exists more than one report about bloody riots in the streets of Cairo over theological issues. [...] [I]ntra-Sunni confessional discord was a profound force shaping Islamic society and urban life."[577] In light of these experiences, both the Ash'arīs and the Māturīdīs in the elite circles of the sultanate were genuinely interested in strategies that allowed them to deal peacefully with the differences between the theological schools.

Fourth, the participants of the *majālis* are generally shown as expressing views in accordance with the theological schools to which they belonged. When penning his treatise on the issue of the (un-)createdness of faith, the Ash'arī scholar Ibn Abī Sharīf relied extensively on al-Ash'arī's writings on the topic and sided with his interpretation of a relevant Quranic verse. The Ḥanafī-Māturīdī first-person narrator of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, when arguing that people who did not profess their faith verbally could not be considered believers, referred to a book of law of his own school.[578] Finally, Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī is shown as favoring Ḥanafī-Māturīdī positions on issues such as the respective roles of reason and revelation and the increase and decrease of faith. His support for the Ḥanafiyya-Māturīdiyya in these debates matches what we

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576   Berger, Interpretations 698. See also Berkey, Policy 17.

577   Mulder, Mausoleum 24.

578   On his *madhhab*, see section 3.1.1 above.

know about the high level of patronage that late Mamluk rulers provided to members of their favored branch of Sunni Islam.[579]

The fifth point concerns how members of al-Ghawrī's salons acted toward those whose views they did not share. Our sources do not provide evidence for a single instance in which Ashʿarīs condemned Māturīdī doctrines as unbelief or vice-versa. In the one case in which Ibn Abī Sharīf declared a particular point of view *kufr*, he could be certain that mainstream Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs did not maintain the doctrine in question. Although members of both groups were obviously aware of the differences between them, they did not engage in mutual condemnation and *takfīr*, as their earlier Seljuq peers had done.

Rather, our sources bear witness to a general tendency toward harmonization and reconciliation between the two Sunni schools. The *majālis* participants championed compromise solutions in several questions on which earlier Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs held conflicting opinions, such as the possibility of an increase and decrease of faith, the respective roles of reason and revelation, and the (un-)createdness of faith. Thereby, they contributed to a marginalization of doctrinal differences between the schools—a process that in turn secured intercommunal peace. It is fitting that in doing so, they relied heavily on the writings of al-Taftāzānī, who is known to have embraced both Ashʿarī and Māturīdī teachings.[580]

Neither al-Ghawrī nor the other high-ranking members of the salons, both Ashʿarī and Māturīdī alike, had any interest in destabilizing the internal structure of the sultanate by fueling disputes about questions on *kalām* and *ʿaqīda*. Instead, they used the high social profile of the sultan's *majālis* and the supreme standing of their convener to spread a message of doctrinal compromise, mutual recognition, and acceptance among Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs. This communicative strategy served the Mamluk elite's overriding goal to avoid religious conflicts in the sultanate.[581] Moreover, this strategy attests to the general Mamluk policy to intervene in religious disputes mainly to stabilize the sociopolitical *status quo*.[582]

By advocating religious peace between the rival Sunni schools, the sultan and his court society further contributed to a larger project of harmonization

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579   See section 4.2.3 above and Fernandes, Politics 89–98; Levanoni, Supplementary Source 159, 170–5.

580   Würtz, *Theologie, passim*, esp. 5–6, 38, 225, 279–80. See also Mauder, Review of *Theologie* 223.

581   Cf. for this harmonizing outlook of Mamluk religious policy, Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 8; Berger, Interpretations 696.

582   Berkey, Storytelling 59. See also Homerin, *Poet* 68–9. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 306–7, includes template letters forbidding heated religious conflicts in the realm.

and unification in Sunni Islam. Al-Subkī's above-mentioned poem, known as the *Nūniyya*, was a particularly important early step in this project which, as Heidrun Eichner showed, was closely related to the historical memory of the intra-Sunni conflicts of the Seljuq period mentioned above.[583] Al-Subkī not only downplayed the significance of several differences between Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs by labeling them as merely terminological; he also emphasized that the remaining differences were by no means sufficient to justify charges of unbelief (*kufr*) or uncanonical innovation (*tabdīʿ*).[584] Later Ottoman authors who wrote about the theological differences between the two schools shared, with very few exceptions, al-Subkī's harmonizing outlook.[585] They did so under similar circumstances as their Mamluk predecessors, for they also lived in a society in which a Māturīdī ruling elite had to come to terms with their mostly Ashʿarī subjects. In reconstructing the later history of *kalām*, however, the late Mamluk contribution to this harmonizing project—also and especially in its courtly dimensions—should not be downplayed, as students of Ottoman theological history sometimes tend to do.[586] Moreover, the insights into the history of late Mamluk theology just outlined remind us of the importance of clearly differentiating between Ashʿarī and Māturīdī positions in the Islamicate middle period, instead of tacitly—and anachronistically—assuming the existence of a unified body of "Sunni theology" in this era. After all, scholars of the late middle period were very much aware of the differences that separated the various religious groups in Sunni Islam.[587] As Heidrun Eichner recently noted, it is probably at least partially due to the prevailing misconception of a unified "Sunni theology" that "a better understanding of the interaction between Ashʿarism and Māturīdism is [still] an important desideratum."[588]

583　Eichner, *Tradition* 385.

584　Badeen, *Theologie* 5, 16, 18, 79; Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 8–9. See also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 355–6; Madelung, Māturīdiyya 847; Berger, Interpretations 697; Madelung, Spread 166.

585　Badeen, *Theologie* 5, 24, 27, 64–5, 79–81. See also Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī* 10–2; Berger, Interpretations 697; Madelung, Spread 166–7; Ahmed and Filipovic, Syllabus 218.

586　Özervarlı, Theology 568, e.g., speaks about Ottoman theologians developing "a new synthesis" between the Ashʿariyya and Māturīdiyya, but does not pay attention to the earlier Mamluk theological development. For even earlier developments in the same direction, see Eichner, *Tradition* 380–8, 410–1.

587　See also Lange, *Paradise* 177.

588　Eichner, Handbooks 496.

5.2   The Sultan's Role in Religious Life

In 2002, Stephan Conermann pointed out that scholarship has so far largely
neglected the problem of whether and in what ways the Mamluk military elite's
religiosity and spirituality were similar to or differed from that of the local pop-
ulation. As Conermann further noted, an analysis of the accounts of al-Ghawrī's
majālis could go a long way toward answering this question.[589]

The present study addresses these desiderata through a case study of Sultan
al-Ghawrī's role in the religious life of his time. In particular, it scrutinizes the
sultan's role in the religious communication of his day and the symbolic signi-
ficance of his participation in religious activities. The selection of the sultan as
the focus of analysis is informed by the peculiarities of our sources which, of all
the members of the Mamluk military, discuss only his participation in the reli-
gious life of his time in considerable detail. Moreover, previous research based
on just a part of the sources available today already shows that al-Ghawrī's
contribution to religious life was multifaceted and rich.[590] Furthermore, liter-
ary offerings such as Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn's *Mawāhib al-laṭīf*,[591] with its strongly
religious character and its focus on the sultan's—real or imagined—pious vir-
tues of justice, willingness to perform *jihād*, mercy, and religious knowledge
demonstrate that the sultan's religious qualities were of interest to his court
and played an important role in contemporaneous discourses about ruler-
ship.

We approach the sultan's participation in religious life in four steps. First, we
focus on his role as protector of religion and morals, then turn to his function
as promoter of religious activities. The third section deals with the sultan's con-
tribution to religious scholarship, while the final one addresses the claims that
al-Ghawrī was the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the Muslim community of his time.

5.2.1   *The Sultan as Protector of Religion and Morals*
For al-Ghawrī and those around him, one of the central roles of the sultan in
religious life was that of protector of religion and morals. Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, the
author of *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*, and the unnamed author of a letter issued by
al-Ghawrī's chancery both refer to al-Ghawrī as the "upholder (*qāʾim*) of the

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589   Conermann, Es boomt 50–1. On the Mamluk military elite's religiosity, see also Haarmann,
        Miṣr 169; Frenkel, *Culture* 16–21.
590   Haarmann, Miṣr 175. See also Petry, *Twilight* 155–6, 159–60, 198, 206, 223, 225–6; Petry, *Pro-
        tectors* 161–6, 202–3, 210; Yalçın (ed. and trans.), *Dîvân* 26–7; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 41.
591   On this text, see section 3.2.3 above.

sunna"[592] while his main endowment deed calls the ruler the "protector (*ḥāfiẓ*) of the religion of the Lord of mankind."[593] Al-Ghawrī's efforts in this regard took various forms, three of which deserve special attention here: the sultan's measures against perceived displays of immodesty and immorality, his encouragement of the regular performance of the ritual prayers, and his punishment of actions seen as violations of the honor of the prophets.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī features one of the most detailed accounts of al-Ghawrī's efforts to curb immoral behavior in his realm. Despite its considerable significance for late Mamluk religious policy, thus far, this part of the work has almost completely escaped scholarly attention and is therefore given in full here:[594]

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "How can it be allowed for the people of Egypt in the days of [the flooding] of the blessed Nile to take residence along the two canals and other places such as Birkat al-Raṭlī and what is similar to it?"
>
> Then, people informed our lord the sultan that many high-ranking people of Egypt from among the *ʿulamāʾ* and others had taken residence in these places. The sultan said in reply to this: "This is due to their lack of manly virtue (*murūʾa*)."
>
> **Answer:** *Shaykh* ʿUmar al-Bulqīnī—may God have mercy on him and forgive him—was asked about this, namely that at the pond known as Birkat al-Raṭlī people of immorality (*ahl al-fasād*) had engaged in different kinds of reprehensible actions (*munkarāt*) and indulged in this such that it gave rise to many women, men, young men, and boys being led astray from the right course. [Moreover, it led to] the waste of money, the spread of rumors, the mixing of men and women, and many reprehensible actions, including drinking wine and eating candied hemp seeds. Therefore, things that are abominable to say became manifest.
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> Among the things that resulted from [this] abominable immorality is that they announced the wedding (*faraḥ*) of the above-mentioned pond and that they celebrated its marriage to al-Nāṣirī Canal. They arranged a betrothal and then performed the wedding ceremony (*ʿaqd al-tazwīj*). [Moreover,] they threw sweetmeats and henna and other things into the

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592 Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 27; Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 122ᵛ, 193ʳ, 240ʳ, 313ᵛ. See also Petry, *Protectors* 155; Homerin, Study 7.

593 Anonymous, *Waqfyya* 882 q, 8.

594 Irwin, Thinking 48, refers to this passage, but does not note that the reply is in the form of a *fatwā* and does not originate—at least according to the text—from the author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

above-mentioned pond. On this occasion, many among the riffraff and many other people assembled there so that much immorality resulted from it. Women came out with their faces uncovered and those women who [were seated] in the windows or on rugs all displayed themselves with their jewelry. Among them were some who were immoral and some who were not immoral, and to those who were not immoral, immoral things happened as well, as is well-known among the people. Among [other] things they did, they hung up many lamps and lit them during the night. [Moreover,] they brought out rags with blood, which they made to resemble the blood of a virgin [on her wedding night], and they made the one who performed the wedding ceremony wear a robe of honor, and the immorality became extensive.

What must the one in command (*walī l-amr*) do when he learns about this shameful immorality? What is necessary regarding someone who persists in this immorality, continues these reprehensible actions, and opposes the people of good deeds? If these scandalous deeds cannot be fought without filling up this above-mentioend pond and forbidding access to it, should the one in command do this or not? If there are houses intended for immorality, may he put an end to the immorality that is going on therein, even if this results in their destruction, if this is seen as a way to fight the obviously reprehensible and scandalous deeds? Will the one in command be rewarded for stopping the reprehensible actions and supporting the people of good deeds? Moreover, will the one who makes an effort to stop these reprehensible actions be rewarded? Is the one who opposes them committing a sin?

Answer: He—may God have mercy on him—said: This affair comprises many immoral things and various kinds of grave sins that none of the people of religion consents to and that must not take root among the Muslims. The one in command must stop all of the reprehensible actions so that these shameful scandalous deeds cease. The continued existence of these is a scandal and nothing but a scandal. Those who perform these calamities or agree to them have reached such an unheard-of rank among the evildoers that one must fear that they will find an evil end, and that they have left the religion of Muḥammad—may God bless him and grant him salvation. The things that have been mentioned regarding the wedding and the other things that constitute a mockery of the order of the sublime revelation (*amr al-sharʿ al-sharīf*) must not be carried out. We seek refuge in God from all discord, be it overt or hidden.

The one who persists in this immorality and continues these reprehensible actions must be severely punished, [such] that he and those like

him are prevented from daring [to do] this, for he takes part in this act of disobedience [against God] (*ma'ṣiya*) by making it an established practice and agreeing with it.

We must censure (*inkār*) what has been mentioned and stand up for God Most High by stopping these scandalous deeds. God may truly protect[595] a people against their disobedience, their transgression, and their falling short of forbidding the wrong (*nahyuhum 'an al-munkar*) that appears among them and that they do. He Most High said: "Those Children of Israel who defied [God] were rejected through the words of David, and Jesus, son of Mary, because they disobeyed, they persistently overstepped the limits, they did not forbid each other from doing wrong. How vile their deeds were!" [Q 5:78–9] It is necessary that whoever performed these reprehensible actions, assisted in making them established practice, and agreed to them must immediately turn to God Most High—may He be praised—in repentance (*tawba*) for these sins.

As for what concerns the above-mentioned pond, the one in command must investigate its affair and if these scandalous deeds come to an end one way or the other—and among them is building a bridge so that punts can no longer enter it—, and if the immorality vanishes through this [completely], then this is sufficient. [However,] if it only comes to an end by means of filling the pond, and this is seen as a way to fight these scandalous deeds, then the one in command may do this.

As for the localities intended for immorality, the reprehensible acts that take place there should come to an end in the legal way (*bi-l-ṭarīq al-shar'ī*). However, if the scandalous deeds that take place therein become overt and these scandalous deeds come to an end only through the destruction of these buildings, then the one in command may destroy them.

With regard to those in command, it is astonishing how these affairs have become known to them, but they remained silent, deceived themselves, and did not turn toward that for which they [now try to] make apologies, and "God is well aware of what they conceal and what they reveal." [Q 2:77][596]

The passage begins with the sultan inquiring about a widespread practice in late Mamluk Cairo. Every year during the Nile flood, the local population—and

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595 Here I read *ammana* according to the manuscript, rather than *la'ana*, which appears in the edition.

596 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 197–201; (ed. 'Azzām) 64–8.

especially the well-off people of Cairo—would take themselves to the north-western suburbs of the city. This area was particularly rich in water thanks to several hydraulic projects, such as the digging of al-Nāṣirī Canal during the eighth/fourteenth century which provided water to a pond known as Birkat al-Raṭlī in the far north of the city.[597] Those who could afford to, took residences there during the summer months and indulged in amusements, such as boating and taking tours through the nearby parks.[598] However, among those worried about morals in Cairo, the area quickly acquired a bad reputation as a place where alcohol was consumed and women of ill repute were to be found.[599]

In al-Ghawrī's time, influential people, including some of the sultan's leading civilian administrators, visited this area during the summer months or had houses there.[600] Among them was Zayn al-Dīn Barakāt b. Mūsā, who in his function as *muḥtasib* of Cairo was in charge of the city's morals, but obviously saw no problem in living, during the summer months, in what could best be described as Cairo's entertainment district.[601] In addition to boat trips[602] that continued to be one of the main attractions and musical performances,[603] the locality also offered opportunities for men and women to meet in a relaxed and at times festive atmosphere, both during the day and at night.[604] Moreover, the area was also known for its locally grown hashish.[605]

According to *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, al-Ghawrī seems to have been aware of this situation, as he asked how it could be permissible that people lived in the Birkat al-Raṭlī area and its vicinity during the Nile flood. When informed that high-ranking people, including members of the scholarly establishment, had taken residences there as well, the sultan reacted by questioning their honor.

Directly after his account of the sultan's inquiry about the Birkat al-Raṭlī area, the author of our source included a *fatwā* by the famous legal scholar Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1403),[606] who had been dead about one hundred years when al-Ghawrī's *majālis* took place. Hence, if the *fatwā* is

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597   Raymond, *Cairo* 125.
598   Winter, *Society* 67–8.
599   Meshal, *Sharia* 254. See also Irwin, Thinking 48; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 14.
600   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 67, 255; v, 179.
601   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 274.
602   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 97, 334; v, 55.
603   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 334.
604   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 97, 333–4.
605   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 156. See also Martel-Thoumian, *Délinquance* 288.
606   On him, see, e.g., Gharaibeh, Brokerage 238–9.

authentic, it cannot have been written in reaction to events in al-Ghawrī's reign. Yet, many of the perceived nuisances described at the beginning of the *fatwā*, such as the intermingling of men and women or the consumption of cannabis products were as present in the very late Mamluk period as they were one hundred years earlier.

The author *al-Kawkab al-durrī* does not indicate whether the *fatwā* was read aloud in the sultan's *majālis*, but its special relevance in al-Ghawrī's time might have been due to the rather harsh course of action it advocated. While "the one in command"—a legal term that in the Mamluk era could only refer to the sultan or his deputies—should first try to curb activities perceived as problematic with other, legal means (*bi-l-ṭarīq al-sharʿī*), according to al-Bulqīnī he was also allowed to use harsher measures as last resort. These included filling up the pond and tearing down the houses built next to it. Through this ruling, al-Bulqīnī granted the ruler a wide margin of discretion in his actions. In this context, it is noteworthy that al-Bulqīnī's final biting remark about the authorities' earlier idleness was kept in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*—an observation that supports the authenticity of al-Bulqīnī's text.

Why were the sultan and those around him interested in this kind of legal assessment at all? Ibn Iyās' chronicle provides a possible answer to this question; in two instances it speaks about the sultan's measures to curb immoral activities in the Birkat al-Raṭlī area. In 917/1511, the sultan forbade a group of civilian administrators from residing at Birkat al-Raṭlī, as he considered moving there a waste of money. Consequently, most summer residents avoided the area that year. Moreover, rumors spread that the sultan planned to cut off the water supply to the pond and ban the use of boats. Ibn Iyās portrayed the sultan's plans, which were similar to measures undertaken under Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 842–57/1438–53), in a rather unfavorable light and reported with a certain satisfaction that they did not materialize.[607]

The second attempt to police the Birkat al-Raṭlī area during al-Ghawrī's time seems to have had a more profound impact. It took place in 922/1516 when al-Ghawrī and the majority of the Mamluk army had already left for Syria to face the Ottomans. In the sultan's absence, his deputy Ṭūmānbāy banned anyone from taking up residence near Birkat al-Raṭlī and stopped all boat traffic on the pond and two neighboring canals. Consequently, in that year, the area was completely abandoned, as Ibn Iyās noted with some regret before quoting an elegy (*marthiya*) mourning its lockdown. Ṭūmānbāy justified his actions by claiming

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607   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 234.

that the women of elite households whose male members had accompanied al-Ghawrī to Syria were in moral danger from the locale.[608]

Both of Ibn Iyās' accounts suggest rationales for the measures against the activities at Birkat al-Raṭlī that are familiar to us from al-Bulqīnī's *fatwā*, including references to squandering money and moral dangers for women. While we cannot ascertain whether the passage in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* that includes al-Bulqīnī's text was directly related to the sultan's actions in 917/1511,[609] the incidents of this year and that of 922/1516 both demonstrate that the sultan and his aides felt a need to take control of what was going on at the pond. At the same time, the sultan and those around him evidently wanted to ensure that their measures were not seen as tyrannical, but rather rested on firm legal ground. Al-Bulqīnī's *fatwā* was most valuable in this context, as it justified even the sultan's rather far-reaching measures. The critical attitude toward the authorities' actions discernible in Ibn Iyās suggests that such legal support was indeed much needed.

Yet, the implications of the quoted text go beyond the immediate actions by the ruling elite to curb immoral behavior in the Birkat al-Raṭlī area. As al-Bulqīnī's *fatwā* and with it *al-Kawkab al-durrī* pointed out, what was at stake here was the Quranic imperative of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*),[610] according to which Muslims must do what they could to prevent others from openly indulging in prohibited actions.[611] While generally seen as every believer's duty, Muslim rulers had a special responsibility to perform *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, be it personally or by delegation.[612] From this perspective, the actions of al-Ghawrī and his aides against the immoral activities at Birkat al-Raṭlī stand out as particularly clear examples of their attempts to present themselves as acting in accordance with Quranic commands.

Moreover, these actions fit into a larger pattern of the priorities of al-Ghawrī, who seems to have been especially concerned with preventing and punishing immoral or illegal deeds among the learned elite. One of his Arabic poems includes a biting satire of self-important and immoral jurisconsults[613] and in

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608   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 56–9.

609   Ṭūmānbāy's action took place years after the composition of *al-Kawkab al-durrī*.

610   This and similar formulations appear in Q 3:104, 110, 114; 7:157; 9:71, 112; 22:41; 31:17.

611   On this concept, see Cook, *Commanding*.

612   Crone, *Thought* 300–2. See also van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 33; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 182–3; Hassan, *Longing* 107; Aigle, *Word* 247, 249; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* x, 126; Mauder, *Türen* 322–4.

613   Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 141.

919/1514, the sultan ordered the prefect of Cairo to imprison every drunken jurisconsult (*faqīh*) that he could find.[614] Apparently, misbehaving members of this group were under special surveillance.

The general population's morals became the focus of the sultan's attention especially at times in which divine support was needed, such as during outbreaks of the plague. On such occasions, al-Ghawrī gave orders to stop the activities of professional female mourners (sg. *nāʾiḥa*) who used tambourines,[615] restrict the mobility of women at night,[616] and prevent people other than official judges from dispensing justice.[617] Moreover, prostitution was banned,[618] containers of wine were broken,[619] places where hashish and alcohol were consumed were destroyed,[620] and the sale of these substances was forbidden.[621]

The sultan and those around him followed rather stern methods of implementing these measures, which they justified with references to Islamic law. In a conversation narrated in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, two *majālis* attendees debated the circumstances under which the forceful or secret removal of possessions from their rightful owners could be licit. One of the few cases in which such clearly forbidden behavior was considered allowable was when it served to "forbid the wrong" (*nahy al-munkar*).[622] This underlines the considerable leeway that people who engaged in *nahy al-munkar* enjoyed in the view of the members of al-Ghawrī's court.

Hence, we can conclude that Sultan al-Ghawrī and his court, at least at times, supported and implemented steps to ameliorate the morals of the population of Cairo. Thereby, the sultan and those around him demonstrated their commitment to the religious commandment of *al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*.

Readers used to viewing al-Ghawrī's reign through the lens of Ibn Iyās' chronicle, as was customary in scholarship for more than a century, may find the notion of the sultan actively fighting immorality surprising, given that Ibn Iyās recurrently censured him for being unjust. Here, it is important to note Ibn Iyās' precise points of criticism: Throughout his work and especially in the sultan's obituary, the chronicler condemned the ruler's avarice and his mis-

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614   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 347.
615   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76. See also Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 69.
616   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76.
617   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76, 320. See also Rapoport, Justice 98–9.
618   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 303.
619   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76.
620   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76–7, 303.
621   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76–7, 303. On wine consumption under al-Ghawrī, see also Lewicka, *Food* 491–2, 533, 545.
622   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 142.

handling of financial matters.[623] Yet we do not know of any case in which Ibn Iyās criticized al-Ghawrī's sexual morals or his observance of Islamic dietary rules. Unlike many other Mamluk rulers, al-Ghawrī was never accused of consuming alcohol or engaging in prohibited sexual activities with women or beardless youths. Although Ibn Iyās conveyed quite a negative image of the ruler,[624] even he did not include any information contradicting the interpretation that al-Ghawrī strived to present himself as a ruler committed to fighting substance abuse and illicit sexual relations, both through his own example and his engagement in *al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*.

Al-Ghawrī apparently also sought to live up to the first part of the Quranic injunction quoted above, that is, commanding right (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf*)—or at least he wanted to be seen to be doing so. In particular, he encouraged his subjects to perform their ritual prayers (sg. *ṣalāt*):

> In Rajab [915/October–November 1509] the sultan ordered that it be announced to the people that [they] should not display disobedience, [they] should not walk around armed after sunset, and that the people should devote themselves to the five prayers in the Friday mosques. They heard [this] through one ear and it left through the other.[625]

Al-Ghawrī's attempt to encourage the population of Cairo to perform the five daily prayers received considerable attention in the secondary literature, though—at least according to Ibn Iyās' evaluation—it was not particularly successful.[626] As Marion Katz noted, attempts by rulers of the middle period to impose the performance of *ṣalāt* upon their subjects were "sporadic at best,"[627] although there existed a widely shared understanding that "organizing and encouraging regular prayer [...] [was] for rulers [...] a central attribute and obligation of legitimate power."[628] Why did al-Ghawrī, of all rulers, pay an unusual amount of attention to this aspect of his duties?

The accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* suggest that the sultan and those around him were greatly concerned about the five daily ritual prayers and their correct performance. First, the sultan arranged for the presence of an *imām* during

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623   See also section 6.2.2 below.

624   On its background, see section 2.1.1 above.

625   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 161.

626   E.g., Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 9–10; Katz, *Prayer* 156–7.

627   Katz, *Prayer* 156.

628   Katz, *Prayer* 155. For this obligation, see, e.g., Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 361; [part 2] 48.

the *majālis* so that he and his intimates could fulfill their religious obliga-
tions, as discussed above.[629] Second, the ritual prayers were a recurring and
almost omnipresent topic in the *majālis* accounts. Throughout *Nafāʾis majālis
al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, more than fifty and eighty textual units,
respectively—most in the form of pairs of questions and answers—deal with
the ritual prayer and its correct performance. Some questions seem to have
been directly relevant to the salon attendees, such as the question reviewed
above, about the validity of a prayer performed while wearing a Sallārī tunic.[630]
Likewise, other questions could have been of personal interest to at least some
members of al-Ghawrī's cosmopolitan court:

> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Is it allowed to recite
> during the ritual prayer in the Persian (*farsī*) language, or [is it] not?"
> **Answer:** "Whoever recites in Persian during the ritual prayer is rewar-
> ded for it, according to Abū Ḥanīfa. But in the view of his two students, he
> is allowed to do so only if he is unable [to recite in Arabic], in accordance
> with the [teachings] of Mālik—may God have mercy on him—, al-Shāfiʿī,
> and Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal]."
> **Question:** His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "Is he allowed or not
> [allowed] to recite during the ritual prayer in a [foreign] language other
> than Persian, according to Abū Ḥanīfa?"
> **Answer:** The *shaykh al-Islām* said: "Deduction by analogy (*qiyās*)
> requires that it be allowed in all languages that exist, but Abū Ḥanīfa
> singled out the Persian language among all [other] languages because it
> is a precisely regulated language (*lugha muqarrara maḍbūṭa*), in contrast
> to other languages which lack accuracy."[631]

While this conversation, which suggests a certain fascination with the Ḥanafī
peculiarity of permitting the ritual prayer in languages other than Arabic,[632]
might have been of some relevance to Persian and Turkic-speaking members
of al-Ghawrī's court, other topics of conversation betray a general intellectual
curiosity about the performance of the prayer under all imaginable circum-
stances. These include the question about how the people in the lands of the
Bulgars in the far north perform their evening prayer (*ʿishā*), given that the sun

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629   Cf. section 4.1.1 above.
630   Cf. section 4.1.2.2 above.
631   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 11–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 10–1.
632   For details, see Zadeh, *Vernacular* 1–2, 53–63, 66–80, 92–3, 103–19, 122–6, 162–3, 288–90,
       476–8.

is visible in this region for only a short period of time.[633] The *majālis* participants opined that the people in this region were exempted from this prayer in general; or they could observe the prayer times of a neighboring country, where the sun could be seen; or they could follow the prayer times of Mecca.[634] Other topics of discussion were of more immediate interest to all Muslims, such as the issue of how much more reward one could obtain for praying in congregation rather than alone[635] or whether one received any reward at all when one greeted someone during the prayer.[636] Taken together, these questions attest to the great importance that the sultan and those around him accorded to the performance of the five daily prayers.

Further evidence shows that the *majālis* attendees regarded the *ṣalāt* as the most important Muslim religious duty. According to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Ghawrī once conversed with the *majālis* participants about a *ḥadīth* according to which on judgment day, all humans will first be asked whether they had performed their prayers.[637] Elsewhere in the *majālis* accounts, we read:

> **Question:** "What is the reason for singling out the prayer and the pilgrimage among the acts of worship?"
>
> **Answer:** The sultan of the insightful said: "Because the prayer is the ladder (*miʿrāj*) of the believers and the path (*manhaj*) [to God] of those who affirm His unity […], and as for the pilgrimage, [it is singled out] because it consists of circumambulations (*ṭawāf*) and it has been transmitted that the circumambulations are prayers (*ṣalāt*) […]."[638]

> **Question:** "If someone who is fasting eats or drinks out of forgetfulness, he does not break his fast. The analogy of breaking the fast would be [the action] of someone who is forgetful and speaks during prayer [which, however, invalidates the prayer]. What is the difference [between the two situations]?"
>
> **Answer:** Our lord the sultan said: "[If] someone who is forgetful speaks [during prayer], [this] invalidates the prayer in the *madhhab* of Abū

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633   On the Bulgars' land as the northernmost part of the Islamized world, see Bosworth, Mahmud 87.

634   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 70–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 26.

635   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 30–1.

636   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 70.

637   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 84.

638   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 85.

Ḥanīfa, because the prayers are the paths (*manāhij*) of the worshippers
[to God], in contrast to the fast, because during [the fast], it is allowed to
buy, sell, sleep, move, be silent, fulfill one's needs, and look around. It is
[thus] possible that one becomes heedless of it; [this] contrasts with the
prayer, since it is not allowed to become heedless of it."[639]

Question: "Which of the pillars of Islam is the most splendid one?"
Answer: The *shaykh al-Islām* said: "The prayer."[640]

These quotations from the *majālis* works, to which we could add several oth-
ers, indicate that in the religious context of al-Ghawrī's court, just like in many
other Islamic contexts,[641] the ritual prayer was seen as the believers' most
important act of worship from which other religious duties, such as the pil-
grimage, derived their significance.

The reason for the exalted status of the ritual prayer was its unique character
as a communicative connection between the believers and God. Our sources
express this connective function through terms such as "ladder" or "path."
These terms reflect what Marion Katz called "a very fundamental assumption
about the nature of prayer: that it is in some sense a form of communication,
combining verbal and nonverbal elements."[642] In a social context such as al-
Ghawrī's court, for which communication was constitutive, the significance of
the ritual prayer as the most direct way of communicating with the divine was
apparently obvious to many members of the court society, including the sultan.

Our sources suggest that the correct performance of the ritual prayer was an
important aspect of al-Ghawrī's personal religious life and his image among
his subjects. *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, in particular, portrays the sultan as a
pious ruler who strived to ensure that his own ritual prayers and those of the
people around him were correct. Among other things, the text describes how in
909/1503–4, the sultan censured a participant in a communal prayer for speak-
ing during the event.[643] Elsewhere, the text recounts that as a young *mamlūk*
recruit the future ruler instructed his fellow slave soldiers in the correct exe-
cution of the *ṣalāt*.[644] A passage about al-Ghawrī's life as an *amīr* includes an
episode in which he faithfully finished his prayers despite a deadly snake dir-

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639   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 166–7.
640   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 213.
641   Cf. Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 231.
642   Katz, *Prayer* 98. See also Katz, *Prayer* 84–102.
643   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 56ᵛ–57ʳ.
644   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 67ᵛ.

ectly in front of him.[645] Evidently, all of these sections in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*
call for a critical approach. Rather than seeing them as sources of information
on what al-Ghawrī said and did, they are relevant as indications of how the sul-
tan and those around him wanted the ruler to be seen. To them, it made sense to
present al-Ghawrī as a pious Muslim who held the ritual prayer in high esteem.
This in turn suggests that the correct performance of the *ṣalāt* was a key quality
in the religious and political communicative context of the late Mamluk court.

A final passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* sheds light on the sultan's
personal religious practices from an unexpected angle. It reads:

> **Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "I wanted to pray two *rakʿa*s with a
> mind free of Satan's insinuations (*bi-farāgh al-khāṭir min ghayr waswasat
> al-Shayṭān*), but I could not do this. What is the reason for this?"
>
> **Answer:** The *shaykh* said: "Insinuation during prayer is something
> peculiar to our revealed law (*sharīʿa*) which is rich in recompense and
> great in reward. Hence, Satan is envious of us and tempts us with wicked
> thoughts; [this is] in contrast to [the adherents of] other revealed laws,
> because the recompense of their prayers is not on the [same] level."[646]

The problem of Satan's insinuation (*waswasa*) was a challenge faced by many
Muslims in the middle period who tried to perform their prayers with the
legally required right intention (*niyya*), but in their own perception did not
reach the necessary level of attentiveness because thoughts interfered with
their concentration on the prayer and disrupted their *niyya*. These thoughts,
understood as coming from Satan and known as his *waswasa*, could render
Muslims unable to pray.[647] Marion Katz interprets this experience as a "psycho-
logical block" resulting from "an open-ended and psychologically taxing quest
for mental focus or spiritual single-mindedness"[648] that affected the pious in
particular.[649] Muslims of the middle period, however, viewed satanic *waswasa*
in a much more negative light, seeing them as consequences of mental aber-
rations, or as manifestations of insufficient familiarity with the revealed law.
Possibly, they could also be caused by untamed desires of the lower self, includ-
ing one's sexual urges.[650]

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645   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 95ᵛ.
646   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 201.
647   Katz, *Prayer* 51–4. See also Katz, *Prayer* 60.
648   Katz, *Prayer* 51 (both quotations).
649   Katz, *Prayer* 51.
650   Katz, *Prayer* 52, 62.

In light of these negative evaluations, it is most noteworthy that *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* quotes al-Ghawrī's statement that he was unable to perform even a short prayer due to satanic insinuations. It is hard to see why al-Sharīf would have included this information in his work, written to secure the sultan's continued patronage if it was not related to what he had experienced in the sultan's *majālis*. This suggests that the sultan might have used the comparatively secluded space of the *majālis* to reflect on his religious experiences. Accounts of these reflections were then included in the texts about these courtly events and give us deep insights into the religious life of the penultimate Mamluk ruler.

With whom did the sultan discuss his experience of satanic *waswasa*? Though not explicitly stated, we may identify the unnamed "*shaykh*" mentioned in the above quoted passage with *shaykh* Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Naqīb al-Samadīsī,[651] who is mentioned two lines earlier as the prayer leader of the *majlis*. Moreover, al-Samadīsī is the only person referred to as *shaykh* in the description of this session. The choice of al-Samadīsī as the sultan's interlocutor appears self-evident: Who was better suited to give the sultan advice about the ritual prayer than his personal *imām*? Moreover, as seen above, al-Samadīsī and al-Ghawrī had a particularly close and long-lasting client-patron relationship up to the sultan's death, in which the *imām* proved to be the ruler's loyal intimate. In his conversation with al-Ghawrī, al-Samadīsī tried to cast a favorable light on the *waswasa* that the ruler experienced by interpreting it as a consequence of Satan's envy of the Muslims. Still, even in al-Samadīsī's understanding, the insinuation was in itself nothing positive, as it came directly from Satan.

Taken together, the evidence from the *majālis* works underscores the fact that for al-Ghawrī and those around him, the ritual prayer played a pivotal role in their understanding of Islamic religious life. As the most direct means of communicating with the divine, for them it surpassed all other forms of worship. Moreover, members of the Mamluk court seem to have shared the understanding that a regular, correct, and scrupulous performance of the ritual prayer was an essential element of what it meant to be a good Muslim and a good Muslim ruler. Against this background, al-Ghawrī, as part of his activities of commanding right and forbidding wrong, tried to encourage his subjects to perform their prayers, thereby showcasing his own righteousness.

Al-Ghawrī's image and social role as a defender of religion also became visible when Mamluk authorities dealt with people accused of violating a

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651   On him, see section 4.1.2.2 above.

prophet's honor. Though rather rare, such cases offer particularly valuable insights into how the sultan handled situations in which religious feelings were at stake and how he sought to fulfill his duty as a ruler to uphold correct religious beliefs and practices among his subjects.[652] Ibn Iyās mentions several occasions during al-Ghawrī's reign in which people were punished for what was perceived as insulting (*sabb*) a prophet. Among these, the first and the last one are of special interest here.[653] For reasons of presentation, we approach these incidents in inverted chronological order.

In Ramaḍān 918/November–December 1512, a Christian from Upper Egypt named ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb was accused of having insulted the Prophet Muḥammad. The local judge heard the witnesses in the case, took note of their reports, and sent the man to Cairo. Here, ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb was brought in front of al-Ghawrī and admitted that the accusations against him were true. The sultan detained ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb and then summoned the chief judges, in whose presence the Christian repeated his confession and declined the offer to become a Muslim to save his life. The chief judges then pronounced him guilty and delegated the affair to a Mālikī deputy judge. The Christian was subsequently paraded through Cairo to al-Ṣaliḥiyya Madrasa, where he was beheaded. Thereafter, the commoners (*ʿawāmm*) burned his body and left the remains for the dogs.[654]

From a legal perspective, the case of ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb was not as straightforward as it might appear from Ibn Iyās' account. The fact that the Christian was guilty of insulting the Prophet Muḥammad as defined by Islamic law seems to have been obvious, especially as the culprit did not deny the accusations. Moreover, he was not willing to forsake his religious community to evade punishment. However, what his punishment should be was less clear, as the different schools of law held conflicting opinions on how non-Muslims living permanently in Muslim-ruled territory as members of a protected community (sg. *dhimmī*) should be treated in such a situation. The Ḥanafī school, to which al-Ghawrī belonged, gave the judge in such cases a certain leeway to determine the punishment, which could range from flogging, to imprisonment, to death.[655] For Mālikīs, such leeway did not exist as, according to their *madhhab*, any *dhimmī* who insulted the Prophet had committed a capital offense

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652   Cf. for this duty, Crone, *Thought* 303–4.

653   On the second incident, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 180–1; Omar, *Apostasy* 333; and on relevant cases in general, see Levanoni, *Egypt* 177–8. For a similar case in Ottoman Syria, see Berger, *Gesellschaft* 288–301.

654   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 286. On this incident, see also Armanios and Ergene, Christian.

655   Lewis, *History* 364.

and had to be executed.[656] Thus, by delegating the case to a Mālikī judge, the four chief judges could be certain that the Christian would be killed. This is another example of how members of the late Mamluk elite consciously used the legal plurality of the sultanate to arrive at a desired outcome.[657]

The sultan seems to have played only a minor role in the affair. Ibn Iyās credited him primarily with detaining the culprit and handing the affair over to the legal establishment. This step could be interpreted as a sign of the sultan's respect for the religious law, which assigned the prosecution of people insulting prophets to the *qāḍī*s' sphere of responsibility. Yet, despite the sultan's minor role in the case, he could still hope to be seen and remembered as a ruler under whom *dhimmī*s insulting the Prophet Muḥammad would be killed. Many of his contemporaries apparently appreciated this course of action, as the fate of the beheaded Christian's body indicates. The way the culprit was paraded through Cairo before his execution must have added considerably to the visibility of the affair and the fame of those involved.[658]

The full significance of the case, however, only becomes clear when compared to an earlier, similar episode in 913/1507. According to Ibn Iyās, a Ḥanafī known as ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, who was a Friday preacher, had insulted the Prophet Abraham with "abominable words that should not be mentioned."[659] He was arrested and asked to repent. Thereafter, a Shāfiʿī[660] deputy judge ruled that his blood should be spared. Ibn Iyās continues:

> When the sultan learned about this, he ardently took the side (*taʿaṣṣaba*) of Abraham the Friend [of God]—upon whom be peace—and said: "I will not give up until I have cut off the head of the one who said these words!" He then gave orders to convene a meeting (*majlis*) in his presence, sat down in the Duhaysha Hall, and sent for the four chief judges. Kamāl al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, the Shāfiʿī [chief judge]; Sarī l-Dīn ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, the Ḥanafī [chief judge]; Burhān al-Dīn al-Damīrī, the Mālikī [chief judge]; and Aḥmad Ibn al-Shīshīnī, the Ḥanbalī [chief judge], came. Then, the sultan gave orders to bring in the former chief judges. *Shaykh al-Islām* Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyyā l-Shāfiʿī,[661] Burhān al-Dīn

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656   Lewis, *History* 365.

657   See section 4.2.1 above. On Mālikī judges in such cases, see Wiederhold, Blasphemy 48–9; Levanoni, Egypt 158, 181.

658   On this incident, see also Petry, *Underworld* 289–90; Martel-Thoumian, *Délinquance* 74, 172, 252; Ingalls, *Innovation* 92–3.

659   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 120.

660   Cf. for his *madhhab*, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 211–2.

661   This is the eminent scholar Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520),

Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Shāfiʿī [...] [and others], as well as a group of *shaykh*s of religious knowledge, including Nūr al-Dīn al-Maḥallī [...] attended. When all [the participants in] the meeting were present, they began to discuss the issue. *Shaykh* Zakariyyā said: "Our doctrine is that when the one who has said this has turned to God Most High in repentance and has asked for forgiveness, his repentance is to be accepted." Ibn Abī Sharīf was of the same opinion. Then, some fighting occurred in this meeting between the chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna and Nūr al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, and everyone among the *ʿulamāʾ* brought forth pieces of textual evidence (*nuqūl*) about this issue. Then, the meeting came to a firm final conclusion, that the one who had said [these insulting words about the Prophet Abraham] should be imprisoned for a long time until he repents. The meeting disbanded although the sultan had made up his mind to have the one who had said this beheaded. They sent [the latter] to prison and imprisoned him, and this was the gist of this affair.[662]

An important difference between this case and the one in 918/1512 was the religious identity of the culprit. In the case under consideration here, the culprit was a Muslim. If the affair had been determined by a Mālikī judge, however, the outcome would most probably have been the same as it was in the case of ʿAbd al-Ṣalīb. Mālikī doctrine calls for the immediate killing of Muslim offenders in such cases, as in the understanding of this school, they had renounced Islam and fallen into unbelief.[663] In the Mamluk era, other legal schools agreed with the Mālikīs in principle, that those who insult the prophets become apostates from Islam and must be killed.[664] There was, however, one important difference between Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Ḥanbalī doctrine on the one hand and Mālikī teachings on the other: The majority of non-Mālikī scholars held that those who became unbelievers by insulting the Prophet should be given a chance to repent and thus could not be killed on the spot.[665] While many Ḥanafī

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who does not seem to have played a prominent role in al-Ghawrī's court for most of the Sultan's reign, possibly because he was already well advance in years and in poor health when al-Ghawrī assumed his office. For what is known about his strained relationship with the Sultan, see, see al-Nādī, *Shaykh* 66–7; Ingalls, *Innovation* 90–3, 102–4.

662   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 120–1.
663   Wiederhold, Blasphemy 49.
664   Wiederhold, Blasphemy 45–6; Friedmann, *Tolerance* 122–4, 127, 150–1. On apostasy and *takfīr*, see, e.g., Griffel, *Apostasie, passim*; Crone, *Thought* 390–2; Friedmann, *Tolerance* 121–59.
665   Friedmann, *Tolerance* 127; Wiederhold, Blasphemy 49; Rapoport, Diversity 220 (the last two on the different Mālikī opinion).

jurists considered "asking for repentance" (*istitāba*) desirable, but not obligatory in apostasy cases, other jurists, including prominent Ḥanbalīs and Shāfiʿīs, regarded it as mandatory, but debated about how much time should culprits be given to repent, with some arguing for indefinite imprisonment, in order to give culprits the opportunity to repent, even if it took all of their lives.[666] Al-Shāfiʿī was among those who were particularly determined to uphold the right of repentance for those who had forsaken Islam and therefore taught that anyone who killed apostates without giving them a chance to repent had to pay blood money for them.[667]

Therefore, the fact that a Shāfiʿī deputy judge first heard ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's case had probably saved the latter's life, as thereafter he was treated according to the teachings of the Shāfiʿī school, which called for his imprisonment to give him time to repent. Moreover, Ibn Iyās' account shows that leading Shāfiʿīs succeeded in having the doctrines of their school observed in this case, even against the sultan's strong opposition.

Yet, why was a Shāfiʿī deputy the first jurist to issue a ruling in ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's case? After all, ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn was a member of the Ḥanafī school and thus one might expect that his case would be dealt with by representatives of his own school, which was, moreover, also the *madhhab* of the ruling military elite of the sultanate.

It seems plausible that a certain level of agency on the side of ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn played a role in this development of his case. As Ibn Iyās notes, ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn worked as a Friday preacher and thus must have had a modicum of training in the religious sciences, including Islamic law. When faced with charges of unbelief, he was probably aware that leading authorities of his own Ḥanafī school would not consider it necessary to give him a chance to repent, and that he would fare even worse in front of a Mālikī judge. Hence, ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn might have actively sought to have his case heard by a Shāfiʿī jurist.[668]

According to Ibn Iyās, even the fact that ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's case fell under Shāfiʿī jurisdiction almost did not save him, as Sultan al-Ghawrī personally wanted him killed—a plan that brought the ruler into conflict with the legal establishment of the sultanate. Carl Petry interpreted Ibn Iyās' narrative of the clash between the ruler and the assembled judges as exposing "tensions

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666   Friedmann, *Tolerance* 127–9, 131, 157–8.
667   Friedmann, *Tolerance* 131.
668   For a similar argument, see Levanoni, Egypt 163.

between […] clerical authorities […] and the regime."[669] This is a reasonable conclusion, even though it must be acknowledged that if al-Ghawrī had really insisted on beheading ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn, there was not much the chief judges and all other attending *ʿulamāʾ* could have done to stop him.

Hence, another interpretation that focuses on the communicative function of the event for the sultan seems at least equally possible. Keeping in mind that Ibn Iyās was more of an outside observer than a member of the sultan's inner court circle, the fact that he was well-informed about al-Ghawrī's intention to kill ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn for Abraham's sake suggests that the sultan's plan was rather widely known among the population of Cairo. Many of the people of Cairo were—as the case of the Christian discussed above demonstrated—quite unwilling to show mercy to someone who had vilified a prophet. To them, the sultan's determination to have a person who had insulted Abraham beheaded might have appeared as a sign of godliness. If the assembled chief judges had sided with the sultan or had found a way to delegate the affair to a Mālikī judge, the sultan probably would have emerged from the incident as the people's champion of piety.

But this is not what happened. Thus, should we see the sultan's intervention as a failure? And if so, why did al-Ghawrī not have ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn killed despite the judges' objections? Rather than seeing the outcome of the incident as a defeat for the sultan which he could only have overturned through brute force, we can understand it as an additional opportunity to demonstrate two sultanic virtues: clemency and, again, piety. By accepting the chief judges' ruling, the sultan demonstrated that he put Islamic law—that is, God's law, to many of his contemporaries' minds—over his own opinions and wishes, as any Muslim believer should do.[670] It is almost ironic that by not putting a man to death who was accused of having defiled the Prophet Abraham, the sultan displayed respect for a good part of what prophets stood for in the religious world of the late Mamluk era. Moreover, through his decision to let ʿUmar b. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn live, al-Ghawrī also exhibited the kind of mercy and clemency that was expected from an ideal ruler.[671]

Furthermore, the sultan used the sensitive issue of the vilifying a prophet in the more secluded context of his *majālis* to demonstrate his piety. In a passage

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669   Petry, Politics 107. On this incident, see also Petry, *Underworld* 169; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 215–6; Omar, *Apostasy* 333; Martel-Thoumian, *Délinquance* 74, 172, 215.

670   On respect for Islamic law as a virtue in Muslim rulers, see, e.g., van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 95, 98; Auer, *Symbols* 14, 144–8; Fleischer, Authority 206–7, 209. This is not to say that al-Ghawrī always followed the law. See, e.g., the criticism in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 90.

671   On clemency as a political virtue, see, e.g., Auer, *Symbols* 150–3; Dʾhulster, Caught 195.

in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, one which has a close parallel in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, the sultan debated with the attendees of his salon about how to react when one was forced to insult the Prophet Muḥammad. Should one apostatize outwardly or be beaten to death? The sultan first gave a legal argument in favor of the second option, then stated: "If it would befall me—God forbid—that I were compelled and forced to vilify the Prophet, I would chose death and would not vilify the Prophet!"[672] Thus, the *majālis* accounts also attest to how important it was for the sultan to be seen as displaying piety by honoring the prophets.

Our analysis showed that contrary to his image in much of the secondary literature, al-Ghawrī took his role as protector of religion and morals seriously—at least outwardly, in certain times, under certain circumstances, and in certain forms. This role included the prevention of behavior that was seen as morally problematic and the encouragement of fellow Muslims to perform their religious duties. Al-Ghawrī thereby demonstrated that he sought to fulfill the Qurʾanic decree of commanding right and forbidding wrong, as a good Muslim ruler should do. While it is impossible to ascertain the sultan's inner motivations, many of his actions had political implications and added to the legitimacy of his rule. This also applies to those rare instances in which the sultan dealt with cases in which people vilified prophets. Here, the ruler presented himself as a stern defender of the honor of the most important religious figures of Islam. However, he also respected the boundaries set by religious law. This matches the sultan's self-representation as found, for example, on the first pages of his main endowment deed, where he is called "supporter of the truth" (*muʾayyid al-ḥaqq*) and "caretaker of the religious law" (*nāẓir al-sharʿ*).[673]

5.2.2   *The Sultan as a Promoter of Religious Activities*

In their writings, members of al-Ghawrī's court paid close attention to the relationship between political rule and religion. For them, the maxims that summarized the ideal state of affairs could often be traced back to the pre-Islamic Iranian cultural heritage and included sayings such as "Religion and rule (*mulk*) are twins"[674] and "Knowledge is the foundation of religion, and religion is the

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672   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 23; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18. Cf. Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 22–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18–9 for the paragraph. The parallel passage is Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83–4.

673   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 7.

674   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 164; Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fol. 7ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), *Ādāb al-mulūk* 7. On this saying, see also Lambton, Justice 96, 103; Black, *History* 21.

basis of rule. The ruler is the keeper of religion. What has no basis will be destroyed, and what has no keeper will get lost."[675]

We do not know whether al-Ghawrī paid heed to such aphorisms, but the sultan's actions suggest that he was aware that people around him expected him to support and promote religious activities throughout his realm. This is nowhere clearer than in the sultan's efforts to endow religious foundations (sg. *waqf*) and facilitate the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Historians have identified financial, political concerns, and religious reasons for the large number of religious endowments that shaped the educational and religious world of the Mamluk Sultanate[676] and were predominantly established by members of the ruling military elite. In financial terms, religious endowments offered members of the Mamluk elite a unique opportunity to protect parts of their economic capital from seizure. The non-endowed property of members of the military elite was often confiscated, at one time or another, by the ruling sultan, at the latest when the owners passed away. Islamic law, however, theoretically protected endowed capital in perpetuity against alienation. Often, members of the elite endowed significant shares of their economic capital for charitable purposes and appointed their offspring as salaried controllers of their *waqf*s and recipients of surplus incomes, thus securing, to some degree, that their descendants would benefit from their wealth. Moreover, founders could specify the respective shares that their progeny were to receive, thus bypassing the inheritance regulations of Islamic law.[677]

In the case of al-Ghawrī's main *waqf*, Carl Petry suggested that the sultan used his endowment not primarily to secure the well-being of his offspring, but rather to establish, through its surpluses, an independent fisc that he could use at his own discretion. Petry's findings and conclusions were presented and reviewed at length above[678] and need not detain us here in detail. Two points, however, deserve special attention: First, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* add further evidence to the assumption that the sultan was interested in the financial leeway that endowments offered. The author of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* depicts the sultan as asking whether the founder of a charitable *waqf* might benefit himself in times of financial need from the support that his endowment provided for the poor. The answer al-Ghawrī received was remarkably

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675   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 4. On this saying, see also, e.g., Lambton, Justice 96; Marlow, Kings 112; Auer, *Symbols* 138; Rosenthal, Justice 100; Ahmed, *Islam* 488–9.

676   See the fundamental study by Berkey, *Transmission*, esp. 128–30.

677   Berkey, *Transmission* 134–7, 142. See also Berkey, Policy 17, 20; al-Ibrashy, Life 147; Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 27–8; Daisuke, *Tenure* 182–7.

678   Cf. section 2.2.1 above.

indecisive, as his unnamed interlocutor stated that some jurists considered such behavior forbidden, while others allowed it. The reply ended in a way that was highly atypical for the *majālis* as portayed in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, with the remark that one could find more information about this issue in books of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. It is possible that the unnamed interlocutor suspected a connection between al-Ghawrī's question and the ruler's peculiar use of his *waqf* and therefore refrained from a clear answer.[679]

Second, scholarship has focused primarily on the fiscal aspects of al-Ghawrī's *waqf* since Carl Petry first published his findings.[680] There can be no doubt that these aspects are highly important for our understanding of late Mamluk history and deserve continued attention. However, this focus on the fiscal functions of al-Ghawrī's *waqf* has largely precluded detailed discussions of its significance for the religious, educational, and political culture of late Mamluk courtly patronage.[681] Therefore, the present study pays special attention to these aspects.

This approach also reflects the fact that many members of the Mamluk elite endowed *waqf*s to gain symbolic and social capital that could be used in the competitive arena of Mamluk politics. In particular, by establishing *waqf*s that comprised magnificent and lavishly decorated buildings that bore their names and were located in the inner cities of major metropoles, members of the Mamluk elite sent a strong symbolic signal about their social status to everyone who saw or learned of their endowed complexes, which were outstanding examples of conspicuous consumption that dominated the cityscape. Often, founders consciously amplified the communicative effects of their newly established *waqf*s by staging large-scale inauguration events.[682]

The endowments of major institutions such as *madrasa*s offered unique opportunities to gain prestige and boost the legitimacy of their founders' social position, especially since every endowment was the act of a single, clearly identifiable individual, and not, for example, of the Mamluk Sultanate as a political entity. As Jonathan Berkey argued, endowments should hence not be seen, primarily, as part of a group strategy used by the Mamluk elite to legitimate

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679 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 117; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34–5. See also Berkey, Mamluks as Muslims 171–2.

680 Cf. section 2.2.2 above.

681 An exception is the architecture-focused study Alhamzah, *Patronage*; see section 2.2.2 above.

682 Berkey, *Transmission* 130, 132–3. Berkey does not refer to the issue of social capital. On the legitimating function of *waqf*s, see also Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 146; Berkey, Policy 21; Karateke, Opium 123; Little, Religion 172; Lev, *Charity* 88–9; Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 29.

the extant political system as a whole, but rather as manifestations of the individual efforts of their founders to improve their standing in the competitive Mamluk political arena.[683]

Finally, for many Muslims of the late Middle period, the act of establishing an endowment that distributed alms to the poor, provided space for Sufi practices, served as a mosque, or supported educational activities had a decidedly religious meaning. Many Mamluk endowment deeds quoted a prophetic tradition which states that continuously giving alms—and the establishment of a charitable *waqf* counted as such—was one of the few things that could benefit believers after their death.[684] Moreover, *madrasa*s and other endowed religious edifices often contained the graves of their founders together with their nearest family members. Those buried there hoped to profit in the afterlife from the *baraka* emanating from the religious activities that took place in these buildings. For the same reason, at times founders sought to have revered men of religion buried next to them. Clearly, *waqf*s fulfilled important functions in the communication between their founders, their Muslim co-religionists, and the divine.[685]

For many founders of a religious endowment, all three types of reasons outlined—financial, political, and religious—probably played a role in their decision to invest a considerable amount of capital in the establishment of their *waqf*s. Moreover, these reasons were, in themselves, interrelated: The protection of financial resources that *waqf*s offered depended on their religious status, while endowed religious institutions could not function without sufficient financial means. Moreover, a considerable share of the prestige that founders could reap from the establishment of *waqf*s came from the religious functions they fulfilled, which in turn depended on the considerable resources that their founders invested to fulfill their aesthetic and legitimating goals.[686]

These general insights into the cultural and religious practice of establishing religious endowments can help us to better understand the role of al-Ghawrī's *waqf*s in the communicative context of late Mamluk religious life. Here, it is useful to begin with al-Ghawrī's main *waqf* which included his funeral complex in Cairo, about which we are particularly well informed.[687] In what follows, we

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683   Berkey, *Transmission* 132–3.

684   Mauder, *Krieger* 9–10; Mauder, Education.

685   Berkey, *Transmission* 143–5. See also Berkey, Policy 20; Little, Religion 172; Mauder, *Krieger* 167; Lev, *Charity* 111–2, 128–30; al-Ibrashy, Life 147–8; Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 27.

686   See also Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 29.

687   See section 3.5 above on the history and layout of this complex. On Mamluk funeral complexes in general, see al-Ibrashy, Life.

analyze six dimensions of its role in late Mamluk religious life: (1) as an institution of learning; (2) as a center of other, primarily religious activities such as Sufi ceremonies and prayers; (3) as a source of charity and employment for the needy; (4) as a place of burial and commemoration; (5) as a space for the housing of religiously significant objects; and (6) as a sultanic space in the center of Cairo. The information provided by the endowment deed (*waqfiyya*) is of central importance for our analysis, as it contains firsthand evidence on how the founder envisioned the social role, internal workings, and religious significance of the complex.

(1) The *waqfiyya* refers to a part of the funeral complex as a *madrasa*[688] and states that the founder dedicated all its rooms to the use of its staff and students.[689] The *waqfiyya* also explains that al-Ghawrī erected the building known as his *madrasa* primarily as a place for worship and the performance of prayers, including the Friday prayers. Thus, while the building in question is called a *madrasa* and it is taken for granted that it was used by students, the endowment deeds evidently saw its primary function as that of a mosque.[690] This was not entirely unusual given that in the late Mamluk period, the words *masjid* and *madrasa* could be used more or less interchangeably, suggesting that the functions of edifices referred to by these terms largely overlapped.[691]

Other stipulations of the *waqfiyya* also show that the *madrasa* did not fulfill all of the educational functions typically associated with this term in the Mamluk era. It did not feature living quarters or stipends for students, nor was there any specifically academic personnel apart from a librarian.[692] The latter's job description included the only known reference to lectures in the *madrasa*, which were supposed to take place twice a week. Moreover, we learn that the *madrasa* library should include books on religious sciences and ancillary disciplines such as *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* studies, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, Arabic linguistics, and logic.[693] Yet, throughout the endowment deed, there is no reference to a professor in any of these fields. The *madrasa*, however, had a full

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688   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 9. See also, e.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 252ᵛ.

689   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 20.

690   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 19–20.

691   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 71, building on the work of Doris Behrens-Abouseif. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 141–2.

692   On librarians in Mamluk endowed complexes, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 28–33.

693   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ, indicates that significant parts of the library holdings came from two scholarly estates, one of which included twenty and the other ten "loads" of book. On the library, see also Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 62–3, 67, 80–1; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 255–8.

staff of religious functionaries, including an *imām*, a Friday preacher, sixteen muezzins, two timekeepers, three Quran readers, a censer bearer, and a person in charge of the lighting of its lamps.[694] Hence, the endowment deed clearly indicates that the *madrasa* served primarily as a place of prayer and only secondarily as an institution of higher learning. It is difficult to explain why this was the case, given al-Ghawrī's great interest in learning and the transmission of knowledge. Apart from financial considerations, it seems possible that the sultan envisioned his funeral complex primarily as a center of religious activities in the narrower sense, while the educational activities he patronized were to take place in the courtly space of the citadel.[695]

Notwithstanding the limited role of higher learning in the complex, it also included a primary school referred to as a *maktab*,[696] where a primary school teacher, his assistant, and a teacher of calligraphy provided basic education for up to forty orphans.[697] This primary school was closely linked to the religious practice of almsgiving and thus—especially with its focus on orphans—was at least as much a charitable as an educational institution.[698]

(2) The beginning of the endowment deed emphasizes that God lavishly rewards those who erect a mosque where the ritual prayers, the Friday prayer, and other forms of devotion can be performed.[699] Thus, from the outset the deed puts the non-educational religious functions of the *waqf* at the center of attention and continues to refer to its Friday mosque (*masjid jāmiʿ*) as its most important component.[700]

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694 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 179–93. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 103–7; Berkey, *Transmission* 17–8; Behrens-Abouseif, Change 89. On the library, see also al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ.

695 On the connection between endowed *madrasa*s and charity, see Lev, *Charity* 99–104.

696 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 7, 26, 33.

697 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 33–4. See also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 289ᵛ–290ʳ; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 269–70, 273–4. For a person who served, apparently, as a teacher of calligraphy in al-Ghawrī's complex, see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* x, 252. Evidence for the sultan's interest in calligraphy education comes also from his library, which is known to have included at least two works that could be used in the training of calligraphers, namely the anonymous work *Kitab Yashtamil ʿalā ḥukm wa-ādāb* described in Fehérvári and Safadi, *Art* 42–5; Atanasiu, *Phénomène* 260; and Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭībī's *Jāmiʿ maḥāsin kitābat al-kuttāb* preserved in ᴍꜱ Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Koğuşlar 882 [non vidi] and edited in 1962 by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid.

698 On primary schools as parts of *waqf*s, see Lev, *Charity* 85–94; and in general Hirschler, *Word* 82–123.

699 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 1. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 53.

700 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 7. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 54. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 68, likewise states that the complex included a *jāmiʿ*.

Later, the introduction of the deed also speaks of the complex as including a *khānqāh*, that is, a space where Sufis could engage in their religious practices.[701] The *khānqāh* consisted of a large hall with two wings, it had a space to store Quran copies, and offered living space for one of the Sufi *shaykh*s in charge of the religious practices taking place there.[702] According to the *waqfiyya*, the entire *khānqāh* was intended as a place of worship, where the five daily prayers as well as Sufi ceremonies should be held.[703] Its staff consisted of a prayer leader, two *shaykh*s, eighty Sufis without further obligations, and about twenty[704] other religious functionaries supporting the Sufi ceremonies held there. These ceremonies included recitations of the Quran, of texts in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad, and from the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.[705]

This intense focus on Sufism seems to reflect al-Ghawrī's interest in this form of religiosity.[706] While unfortunately we do not know whether the Sufis of al-Ghawrī's complex belonged to a specific order, we know enough from the *waqfiyya* about their religious ceremonies to confirm that al-Ghawrī supported a kind of Sufism that was closely connected to the world of religious learning and its textual tradition. Moreover, the Sufis of his complex were not expected to perform any practices that contemporaneous jurists would have considered problematic, but rather seem to have reflected closely what al-Ghawrī himself considered proper Muslim religiosity.

(3) Charity constitutes another prominent topic of the introduction of the *waqfiyya*. The deed takes up a notion found in Q 11:161, according to which God multiplies everything that is given in charity 700 times in the record of good deeds. It then continues with further references to God's encouragement of almsgiving and charity, thus clearly showing that al-Ghawrī's endowment was to be interpreted against the background of Islamic concepts of charity, almsgiving, and divine reward.[707]

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701   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 9 (spelling as in the deed). On the connection between endowed *khānqāh*s and charity, see Lev, *Charity* 104–10; and on *khānqāh*s as religious institutions, see Fernandes, *Evolution*, esp. 16–9. In contrast to other *khānqāh*s, al-Ghawrī's complex did not provide living quarters for numerous Sufis, cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Change* 91. According to Fernandes, *Evolution* 109, limited space prompted the builder to forgo non-essential elements.

702   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 24–5, 30. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 81.

703   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 33.

704   It is not clear whether these positions could be taken over, in part, by the eighty Sufis.

705   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 194–8. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 108–9; Fernandes, *Evolution* 89–91. On the religious functions of the complex, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 68; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 377.

706   Cf. section 5.1.2 above.

707   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 1–2. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 53–4.

The public fountain (*sabīl*) that provided everyone with water free of charge was one of the most important ways in which this focus on charity manifested itself in the funeral complex.[708] Together with the mosque and the primary school, this *sabīl* is singled out at the beginning of the deed as one of the most important components of the structure.[709] For the neighbors of the complex, the possibility of obtaining water from the *sabīl* and performing their prayers in the mosque were probably indeed of great importance. Even Ibn Iyās, often critical of al-Ghawrī's actions, emphasized the positive impact of the funeral complex on its neighbors.[710] Moreover, the *waqf* provided alms to more strictly defined groups such as the Sufis and orphans associated with the complex, who were to receive regular donations of bread. The orphans were also given new clothes every Ramaḍān, while the poor could receive free meat on ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā.[711]

In addition to this kind of charitable almsgiving, the endowment also served as a major instrument of patronage for the sultan, as it provided salaried positions for about 230 persons (excluding the orphans), beginning with its controller and ending with its two plumbers.[712] Thus, it functioned as an important source of employment in late Mamluk Cairo and there is evidence that the sultan made strategic use of the patronage opportunities it provided. As seen above, trusted clients of the ruler, such al-Sharīf, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,[713] or Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf and al-Samadīsī,[714] received protective patronage by means of the socioeconomic opportunities that the endowment of the complex provided. Hence, we should view al-Ghawrī's funeral complex as part of the larger network of court patronage around the ruler.

(4) Together with its role as a mosque, the second main purpose of the complex was, according to the *waqfiyya*, to serve as al-Ghawrī's mausoleum (*qubba*).[715] The *waqfiyya* specifies that the part of the complex known as a *qubba* should serve as place of burial for the founder, his children, his wives, and concubines. The domed funeral chamber located on the right-hand side of

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708   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 33. See also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 294ᵛ–295ʳ; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 150–3.
709   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 7.
710   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 68.
711   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 213–6, 218–9.
712   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 179–212. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 103–14.
713   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
714   Cf section 4.1.2.2 above.
715   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 7.

the *miḥrāb* of the *khānqāh* had two windows which opened to the prayer hall and established direct spatial links between the religious center of the building and the burial space.[716]

The religious and commemorative character of the burial site was further enhanced by three Quran readers who recited in the mausoleum in the morning, at noon, and in the afternoon.[717] The spiritual benefit of other recitations of the Quran within the complex was to be dedicated in part to the founder and the other people buried therein.[718]

The main purpose of all these stipulations was to provide the founder and all others buried in the complex with sources of *baraka* after their death. In the "economy of merit"[719] that for many Muslims of the middle period defined their relationship with the divine, this kind of postmortem acquisition of *baraka* was a most promising way to improve the state of the deceased in the afterlife. Hence, the religious views shaping al-Ghawrī's endowment were closely linked to Islamic eschatological concepts that, as we saw, loomed large in the debates at the sultan's court.[720] Ironically, however, the sultan, who had invested so much care and so many resources in the construction of his funeral complex, was not buried there, as his body was never found after the battle of Marj Dābiq.[721]

(5) Quran recitations and related activities were not the only channels through which those buried in the complex would receive *baraka*. For his burial space, al-Ghawrī had secured a source of *baraka* that, in the understanding of his time, must have outshone all others and made his mausoleum unique in the religious landscape of late Mamluk Cairo.

The *waqfiyya* mentions this outstanding source of *baraka* in its description of the burial chamber of the complex:

> At the far end of the tomb there is a noble *miḥrāb* with a marble re-vetted façade and hood. It is flanked by two chests, one for the noble Qurʾān of the [Caliph] ʿUthmān, and the other for the noble relics of the

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716 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 22–3, 33–4. On the *qubba*, see also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 252ʳ–254ʳ; 284ᵛ–293ʳ, 294ᵛ.

717 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 193–4.

718 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 448. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 120.

719 Katz, *Birth* 82.

720 Cf. section 5.1.4.1 above.

721 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 87. See also al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 61; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 240. The complex served as a burial place for members of his family, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 168, 307; v, 28, 30–1.

Prophet [Muhammad]. Each [box] has a gold-colored door made from imported wood.[722]

Other sources, such as Ibn Iyās, provide more detailed information on these special objects:

> To al-Ghawrī, noteworthy things happened that had happened to no other ruler, and among them is that he moved the noble prophetic relics (*āthār*) from the place where they were overlooking the Nile River and brought them to his *madrasa*. [...] [An early Mamluk government official had bought them and] had built for them a mosque overlooking the Nile River, and the people used to go there for *ziyāra* every Thursday. When the place in which the noble relics were located was ruined, the sultan asked the scholars for a *fatwā* and they issued a *fatwā* that they [the relics] should be moved to his burial chamber (*madfan*) in his mausoleum. This was against the stipulation of the founder [of their original place of deposition]. Then, the sultan had the ʿUthmānī Quran copy brought to his *madrasa*, too.
>
> Good things happened to al-Ashraf Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī pertaining to his *madrasa* that had not happened to any one of the previous rulers. He kept there rare things of distinguished status. It was a memorable day when the noble relics and the ʿUthmānī Quran were moved to his *madrasa*. The four chief judges, the *atābak* Qayt, and a group of *muqaddam amīr*s, Sufis, and heads of *zāwiya*s who were performing *dhikr* walked in front of them with banners.[723]

Ibn Iyās' account makes clear that in the religious landscape of Mamluk Cairo, a repository for prophetic relics was not a new phenomenon, given that an earlier place had fulfilled the same function on the shores of the Nile, where it became a destination for *ziyāra*.[724] When this place fell into disrepair, al-Ghawrī seized the opportunity and had the relics brought to his funeral complex.[725] Though it

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722   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 22–3, trans. Alhamzah, *Patronage* 75. On the chest that held the Quran, see also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 123ʳ–123ᵛ.

723   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 68–9. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322, 377–8; Taymūr Bāshā, *al-Āthār* 43–7; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 89; Abdulfattah, Relics 93; Petry, *Protectors* 163.

724   On the background of the relics, how they reached Cairo, and the mosque built for them, see Abdulfattah, Relics 82–92; Margoliouth, Relics 25–7; Taymūr Bāshā, *al-Āthār* 35–43.

725   Abdulfattah, Relics 87, states that the sultan supported this mosque, too. See Ibn Ṭūlūn,

involved overriding the original endowment deed of the mosque in which the relics were located, al-Ghawrī did so with the full support of the scholarly elite. This shows that al-Ghawrī did not simply use his supreme position to have the relics brought to his complex, but rather followed the proper legal procedure prescribed. Even pious observers could voice little criticism against the sultan's move, as he made sure that the religious significance of the relics would not be tarnished by improper handling. Moreover, the sultan also organized a major parade for moving the relics; thus, he made their new location known and concomitantly displayed his piety.

What, exactly, were the relics that the sultan moved to his funeral complex? No source dating to al-Ghawrī's reign gives a detailed list, but later texts indicate that these relics included a kohl applicator, a pencil, a shirt, and a stick that were believed to have belonged to the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as two hairs thought to have come from his beard.[726] Although not a prophetic relic in the strict sense, the ʿUthmānī Quran, which al-Ghawrī had carefully restored,[727] seems to have been understood as belonging to the same set of objects.

The veneration of prophetic relics was a significant feature of the religious life of Egyptians of the late middle period and has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years.[728] Rather than reiterating the general findings of this literature, we focus here on the relics in al-Ghawrī's complex and discuss five reasons the sultan might have brought them there.[729]

First, as already indicated, the named objects with their direct connection to the Prophet's body were regarded as particularly powerful repositories of *baraka* from which the sultan and those buried in the complex hoped to benefit.[730] Moreover, by having them brought to his complex, the sultan signaled to his contemporaries that as a pious Muslim he believed in the efficacy of these objects.

Second, by moving these relics to his funeral complex, al-Ghawrī most likely hoped to turn it into a locus of special religious significance that would attract people from near and far who wanted to perform *ziyāra* to the venerated relics,

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Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322, on the fact that the mosque had been in disrepair.

726 Abdulfattah, Relics 77.

727 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 122ᵛ–123ᵛ, 251ʳ–251ᵛ.

728 See Abdulfattah, Relics, with references to further literature.

729 Arguments similar to those made above for the prophetic relics could also be advanced regarding the Quran of ʿUthmān. Meri, Relics 116–7; and Meri, *Cult* 114–6 offer discussions of this object as a repository of *baraka* and a symbol of political authority.

730 See also Abdulfattah, Relics 93–4; and in general Meri, Relics 101, 103–5, 113; Meri, *Cult* 103, 108; Margoliouth, Relics 20.

as had happened with the mosque that had housed them earlier.[731] A regular stream of visitors to his funeral complex would bring additional *baraka* for the sultan—for example, through the supplications of those who performed their devotions in the presence of the relics. Moreover, turning it into a pilgrimage destination greatly added to the significance of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex in the social and religious landscape of Cairo and reflected positively on its founder.

Third, large numbers of pilgrims would have been economically beneficial for the endowed complex, which included shops that could cater to the visitors' needs.

Fourth, the sultan's movement of the relics to his complex was in itself a performative demonstration and symbolic display of his supreme status. The fact that they were thereafter housed in his funeral complex—and not in any of the other dozens of religious structures of central Cairo—showed everyone that al-Ghawrī commanded the necessary economic, social, and cultural capital to have them brought there. Thus, the relics served, in the words of Josef W. Meri, as "emblems of power."[732] Moreover, it is noteworthy that the funeral complex of al-Ghawrī's former master and predecessor Qāytbāy likewise housed prophetic relics.[733] Although there is no evidence for a direct link between the groups of objects in the two sultanic complexes, it seems possible that al-Ghawrī had the relics brought to his complex to demonstrate that he stood on equal footing with his revered predecessor, in terms of both piety and political status.

Finally, by securing a close physical connection between himself and the Prophet's relics, al-Ghawrī also boosted his own political legitimacy.[734] As Abdulfattah argued, "relics were used by rulers and the ruling elite not only as powerful symbols of legitimacy, but as sacred weapons in struggles for legitimacy."[735] Given that rival dynasties such as the Ottomans and the Safawids also sought to emphasize their close connection to the Prophet—the former likewise through the acquisition of relics,[736] the latter through claims of prophetic lineage—, the relics in his funeral complex offered al-Ghawrī a chance to keep pace with his competitors and counter their claims for supreme legitimacy through his own close connection to the Prophet's physical legacy.

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731   See also Abdulfattah, Relics 93; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 139.

732   Meri, Relics 102.

733   Abdulfattah, Relics 95–101.

734   Cf. Meri, Relics 103.

735   Abdulfattah, Relics 102. See also Meri, Relics 100; Meri, *Cult* 108; Auer, *Symbols* 74.

736   For relics in the Ottoman context, cf. Abdulfattah, Relics 102; Necipoğlu, *Architecture* 252; Peirce, *Harem* 163; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 169–71, 280; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 37; Margoliouth, Relics 27; Wheeler, *Eden* 90.

(6) The *waqfiyya* makes it clear that the construction of the funeral complex and its endowment as a *waqf* created a special, sultanic space in central Cairo that was directly connected to the person of the ruler. The beginning of the endowment deed unmistakably highlights this point by enumerating, on several pages,[737] the sultan's names, titles, and other forms of address that emphasize several central aspects of his program of legitimation, including his status as heir of the Prophet Joseph[738] and as caretaker of the revealed law.[739] Moreover, the deed repeatedly uses linguistic markers, such as the adjective *sulṭānī*, to indicate the close connection between the ruler and his complex.[740]

Even after its founder's death, the complex was intended to have a special connection to the ruler of the realm. Upon al-Ghawrī's death, his position of controller of the *waqf* should not go to al-Ghawrī's oldest son Muḥammad— who was only to hold the office of deputy controller—or to any other member of his offspring, but to al-Ghawrī's successor as ruler of Egypt.[741] This suggests that the complex was not primarily intended as a sinecure for al-Ghawrī's extended family. Rather, it was to be under the direct authority of his political successors and provide them with economic, social, and cultural capital.

Architecture was another strategy through which the founder highlighted the special status of his complex vis-à-vis the neighboring buildings and other religious foundations in central Cairo. In this "arena for the public display of Mamluk power and pomp,"[742] numerous noteworthy architectural features made the funeral complex stand out. Among them, the novel design of its circular central hall and its minaret must have attracted particular attention. The minaret, as the highest part of the complex, was crowned by four small domes, a feature without parallel in Mamluk architecture.[743] Works such as al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* or al-Sharīf's *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* refer to the minaret in particular when praising the sultan's funeral complex

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737   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 7–9. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 54–5.

738   Cf. section 4.2.4 above.

739   Cf. section 5.2.1 above. On the legitimating function of the *waqf*, see also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 126, 132–43.

740   E.g., Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 9.

741   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 222–3. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 119; Amīn, *al-Awqāf* 117; and on al-Ghawrī's son, see Mauder, Rule 168–80.

742   Rabbat, *Staging* 7.

743   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 131; Petry, *Protectors* 163 (for the hall). For a possible, but uncorroborated symbolic interpretation of the four small domes, see Alhamzah, *Patronage* 130–1. On the unique minaret, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 58; al-Malaṭī, *Nuzhat* 155; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 81–2; Mardam Bik, *al-Malik* 27; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 254ʳ–255ʳ.

and its design.[744] Even Ibn Iyās acknowledged: "[The complex] was extremely beautiful, elegant, and splendid, such that nothing like it had been built in our time."[745] Jean Thenaud's travel account shows that the architecture of the complex impressed foreign visitors as well.[746] Modern experts agree with this positive evaluation of its architecture. For example, Nasser Rabbat called it a "particularly successful example" of "manipulating the winding street layout of Cairo for maximum visual effect."[747] Thus, if funeral complexes were, as May al-Ibrashy argued, "first and foremost signifiers of power and perpetuators of political glory,"[748] then the architecture of al-Ghawrī's complex was well-suited to fulfill this communicative end.

Likewise, the epigraphic program of the complex affirmed both its sultanic character and its significance for the legitimation of al-Ghawrī's reign. For example, an inscription on the eastern façade of the *madrasa* enumerates, at length, al-Ghawrī's titles and full name, thus establishing a permanent connection between the building and its sultanic commissioner. Moreover, a quotation of the first four verses of Q 48 beginning with the words, "Truly We have opened up a path to clear triumph for you […]" suggests that al-Ghawrī sought to be recognized as a divinely ordained ruler.[749] Similar inscriptions that cited Quranic verses, offered prayers for the founder, or enumerated his titles were found on other sides of the façade.[750]

Al-Ghawrī used several other, non-architectural and non-epigraphic means to draw attention to his complex and signal its supreme status as a ruler's endowment. On the occasion of the completion of the *madrasa* on ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā in 908/1503, the ruler hosted a major inaugural celebration which Ibn Iyās described as follows:

> On the night of the feast of the sacrifice during this month, the construction work on the sultan's *madrasa* that he had built in the Sharābshiyyīn [Street] was finished. He hosted a lavish banquet there that night. The caliph al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh Yaʿqūb, the four chief judges, and the notables from among the administrators and *amīr*s came to it. The Quran

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744   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 7ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 169; (ed. ʿAzzām) 64. On the sultan's complex, see also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 174–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68–70.

745   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 54. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 58.

746   Cf. Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 50.

747   Rabbat, *Staging* 10. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 137–9.

748   Al-Ibrashy, *Life* 146.

749   See also section 6.2.2 below.

750   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 134–6.

readers of the city and the preachers came [as well]. He [that is, the sultan] provided lavish repasts there and made a huge fire. The shops located there, from Bāb al-Zuwayla to Shawāyīn [Street], were decorated and illuminated with burning candles. This was a memorable night.[751]

While the sultan apparently did not participate in this event in person, through generous investments of economic capital he ensured that the attendees had everything they needed. Through their presence, the participants, who included key members of the sultan's court society, sent a strong signal of support for the ruler, whose food they ate and in whose *madrasa* they celebrated. Even Ibn Iyās seems to have been impressed, although this did not prevent him from criticizing al-Ghawrī for using unjust methods, such as confiscation, to obtain resources to build his *madrasa*.[752]

About four months later, the sultan staged another major event in the same locality on the occasion of the first Friday sermon delivered there. The sultan made sure that the leading figures of the religious and political establishment, including the caliph, the four chief judges, most of the top *amīr*s and lower-ranking members of the military, and the administrative apparatus attended this ritual to highlight its significance. Al-Ghawrī had neighboring streets decorated and used the occasion to award robes of honor to those involved in the construction work and to the Ḥanafī chief judge who had confirmed its status as a *jāmiʿ* mosque.[753] Thereby, the sultan demonstrated to all the attendees that he was willing and able to reward clients who rendered valuable services to him. Furthermore, this event indicated that the sultan's funeral complex was now fully operational. Approximately one year later, the sultan again highlighted the profile of his complex in the cityscape of Cairo when he had the relics of the Prophet transported there in a lavish parade, as noted.

In the following years, the sultan visited his complex repeatedly, thereby drawing the attention of the population of Cairo to this structure while performatively reaffirming the connection between himself and this sultanic space. Some of these visits, which Ibn Iyās usually explained as the sultan's

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751   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 52–3. See also Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 175; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 255ʳ–269ʳ.

752   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 53. See also Petry, *Twilight* 167–8; Petry, *Protectors* 163; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 88.

753   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 58–9. See also Petry, *Twilight* 147. The sultan's bestowal of largesse might have been premature, as the minaret of his complex had to be rebuilt in 911/1505 after showing signs of structural instability, cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 84. On further structural problems and repairs, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 249, 299, 302; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 82.

efforts to inspect (*kashafa*) the buildings he had constructed or renovated, were organized as full-fledged courtly events, and included the decoration of the sultan's route through Cairo, the presence of an armed escort, and a banquet at the complex.[754] During such visits, the sultan reenacted his charitable act of endowing the complex on a smaller scale, by donating money or clothes to its staff or the orphans educated there.[755] Through these recurring courtly events, the complex acquired the quality of a courtly space.

The complex was used during the sultan's reign for other purposes closely linked to his religious policy and the needs of his court society, too. We saw above how a Safawid envoy was compelled to attend a Friday sermon there which praised Abū Bakr.[756] In 921/1515, the sultan's son Muḥammad spent the night there on the return from his pilgrimage to Mecca, thereby establishing a link between the sultan's main *waqf* and the Islamic sanctuaries in the Hijaz that Muḥammad had just visited.[757]

The special significance of al-Ghawrī's complex as a sultanic space that was closely connected to the ruler's person also became obvious after Selīm's conquest of Egypt. Immediately after the Ottomans' conquest of Cairo, they arrested the members of the Mamluk military that had remained in the city. The *amīr*s who surrendered were commanded to come to al-Ghawrī's *madrasa*, while the *wikāla* (inn) attached to the complex functioned as a prison for rank-and-file soldiers.[758] The communicative significance of this move can hardly be overestimated. Designed as emblems of Mamluk sultanic rule, the edifices now served to incarcerate the last members of the Mamluk military. Later, the Ottomans used al-Ghawrī's complex as the administrative headquarters that organized the deportation of the most qualified Egyptian legal scholars, merchants, artisans, and craftsmen to Istanbul.[759] It seems probable that the Ottomans did not choose the funeral complex by accident, but rather purposely inverted its earlier symbolic significance as a Mamluk courtly space and used it to dramatize Egypt's new status as a conquered province. It was only fitting that Sultan Selīm, when he first saw it, allegedly disparaged the architecture of al-Ghawrī's *madrasa* as not befitting a ruler.[760]

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754   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 236–7, 244. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 302, 328; v, 29–30.

755   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 236, 399.

756   Cf. section 5.1.1.1 above.

757   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 439.

758   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 159, 161.

759   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 178–9.

760   Rabbat, Agent 119.

Summing up our findings about the communicative significance of al-Ghawrī's main *waqf* in the context of late Mamluk court life, we note that the complex supported by this endowment played a key role in transmitting and reaffirming the image of the sultan as a pious, generous, and legitimate ruler who supported Islam through his investment of capital in educational, religious, and charitable purposes. To this end, several events and objects of particular communicative significance were used, including banquets; parades; sophisticated, innovative architectonic structures; and relics of the Prophet Muḥammad. Furthermore, through the construction of the complex the sultan created a religiously significant space in central Cairo that was not only an important destination for those who wanted to obtain *baraka* and benefit from the services offered there, but could also serve as a courtly space where members of the court society, including the sultan, could interact with each other and the broader population. Finally, the sultan used the complex to establish and maintain patronage relations with members of his court society.

Several of the sultan's other construction projects fulfilled similar roles in the complex religious landscape of the sultanate. However, since we frequently lack detailed information about the history, makeup, and functions of these other religious edifices, the precise ways in which they contributed to the religious life of the realm often elude us. Yet, the sheer number of these structures shows that the sultan not only sought to live up to his role as promoter of Islamic religious life, but also aimed to eternalize his efforts in stone. These other construction projects in Cairo apparently bore religious significance:[761] the construction of a double-finial minaret with supporting structures at al-Azhar Mosque and the reconstruction of its central dome,[762] the building of a mosque near the newly laid out park-*cum*-hippodrome (*maydān*),[763] the repair of a mosque at the Bāb al-Qarāfa,[764] the renovation of the tombs of al-Layth b. Saʿd and al-Shāfiʿī,[765] the establishment of a font for washing corpses,[766] and

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761   For construction projects without primarily religious significance, see section 6.3.2 below.

762   Rabbat, al-Azhar 73, 78, 81, 87, 90–1; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94. See also Tamari, Inscription 187; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 117, 137; Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya* i, 130; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 19, 73, 80, 90, 297; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 470.

763   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94. See also Tamari, Inscription 187; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 47; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 463.

764   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 137.

765   Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 457–8.

766   Petry, Institution 484–5. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 47, 137; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 459.

the renovation of a mosque near the Nilometer.[767] Outside the capital, the sultan erected, inter alia, a mosque in al-Ṭīna in the northern Sinai Peninsula,[768] renovated al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem[769] and, while still an *amīr*, contributed to the upkeep of the main mosque of the city of Tarsus and the tomb of the Prophet Daniel located there.[770] Thereby, he made sure that those who did not live in Cairo or visit the city could still perceive with their own eyes how much the sultan cared for Islam—or at least signaled that he cared.

In addition to these more widely dispersed localities, al-Ghawrī sponsored a second regional cluster of construction activities besides those in Cairo, namely, those in the Hijaz, with its main city of Mecca, and the land route that connected this region of the Arabian Peninsula with the Egyptian capital. In Mecca, the sultan engaged in a series of construction projects second in scope, in Mamluk times, only to those of his former master Qāytbāy.[771] These projects included the construction of a complex at the Ibrāhīm Gate of the main mosque of Mecca that included an ablution fountain, a hall, and living spaces producing income for charitable purposes in the city; the building of a Sufi lodge (*ribāṭ*) with an attached hospital; improvements in the water supply of the city; the marble tiling of the circumambulation space of the Kaʿba; the renovation of the wall at the northwestern side of the Kaʿba known as Ḥijr Ismāʿīl; and the reconstruction of a portico of the main mosque.[772] Moreover, the sultan allocated the income of a minor religious endowment to the senior eunuch of the sanctuary of Medina,[773] and set aside some funds of his main *waqf* to support poor pilgrims.[774]

On the route from Mecca to Cairo, the sultan constructed several inns and garrison outposts, including the ones at Aqaba, al-Ajrūd, al-Nakhl, and al-

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767   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 160; v, 94. See also Tamari, Inscription 187; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 47, 137; Popper, *Nilometer* 27.

768   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 47.

769   Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 463. See also Tamari, Inscription 187.

770   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 88ʳ.

771   On Qāytbāy's construction activities, see Mortel, Madrasas 249–50; Mortel, "Ribāṭs" 48; Behrens-Abouseif, Qāytbāy's *Madrasah*s; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 236–7, 288, 293, 311–2; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 23; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 28, 30; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 231ʳ–234ᵛ; and in general Newhall, *Patronage*.

772   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* i, 237; iii, 1808–12, 1834–5, 1859, 1956; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 193–4, 200–2; al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 171. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 244; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 163; al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 64; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 449, 463–5.

773   Petry, Innovations 458 See also Petry, Institution 484.

774   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 117.

Azlam,[775] and restored water stations along the way.[776] Moreover, al-Ghawrī commissioned engineering projects that improved the roadways of the over-land pilgrimage route from Egypt.[777] Among these engineering projects, the most outstanding was one in modern-day southern Israel that involved cut-ting a road of about 180 meters through a limestone massif that had previously constituted a major obstacle for pilgrims.[778]

Together, these projects constituted significant investments in the urban landscape of Mecca and the route connecting it with the Mamluk capital; these investments greatly surpassed the sponsorship of architecture of most other Mamluk rulers in the region. The explanation for these activities undoubtedly lies in the symbolic significance of the city of Mecca and the pilgrimage rituals centered on it. In these activites al-Ghawrī found unique opportunities to present himself to broad audiences as a protector of Islamic religious life and a legitimate Muslim ruler. The fact that, in principle, all able Muslim believ-ers were required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life-times turned the city into what Malika Dekkiche called "a powerful medium of legitimization and supremacy for rulers seeking the supreme leadership of the Muslim community."[779] As Jo van Steenbergen argued, "[t]he contraction of caliphal power […] and the concomitant realities or devolution, fragmenta-tion, and rapid transformation of Muslim political power between the Atlantic Ocean and the Oxus and Indus valleys generated a huge increase in the need for local and regional political legitimation."[780] Control of Mecca as a signific-ant hub of transregional communication was one of the most promising ways to acquire this kind of legitimacy.[781]

Since the beginnings of the Mamluk Sultanate, the establishment, mainten-ance, and performative demonstration of suzerainty over Mecca and neighbor-

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775 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 133, 144, 151–2, 163, 444. See also al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 61, 64; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 240; Tamari, Inscription 176–7; Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 180–1, 185, 187–8, 196; Walker, Effects 67; Glidden, Origin; Pardines, Fortifications 46–50, 52; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 460–1; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 95.

776 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 129.

777 On the pilgrimage route, see Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 170–204; and on al-Ghawrī's improve-ments, see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 151–2; v, 95; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159.

778 Tamari, Inscription 179. See also Tamari, Inscription 179–87; ʿAbd al-Mālik, al-Naqsh 104–8.

779 Dekkiche, Source 247. See also van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 13–5, 20–1; Meloy, *Power* 13.

780 Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 14. See also section 6.1 below.

781 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 3–4. See also Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 127.

ing Medina constituted one of the mainstays of Mamluk claims for political and religious legitimacy.[782] The Mamluk sultans did not rule Mecca directly, but engaged in dynamic processes of patronage, negotiation, and recognition with the local Meccan dynasty of the Sharīfs, who, from a Mamluk perspective, functioned as deputy rulers of the Hijaz on the sultans' behalf.[783] For the Sharīfs and their subjects, close relations with Egypt were of vital importance, as they depended on Mamluk supplies of grain and other goods.[784]

The Mamluk rulers' suzerainty over Mecca and Medina proved vital in their efforts to maintain their status as what Dekkiche called "the supreme representatives of the Muslim community."[785] To communicate this status, they appropriated the title, originally Ayyubid, of *khādim al-ḥaramayn* (custodian of the holy cities)[786] which has been called "perhaps the most prestigious honorific of postcaliphate times."[787] Although al-Qalqashandī listed this title as a customary sultanic honorific,[788] not all Mamluk rulers used it frequently, and some apparently shunned it all together.[789] Al-Ghawrī, however, employed this title and its variants repeatedly and consistently in a broad array of contexts. It appears in his main endowment deed,[790] in a letter issued by his chancery,[791] and in several building inscriptions in Cairo,[792] Damascus,[793] the Sinai Peninsula,[794] and Mecca.[795] It also features in Martin Baumgarten's enumeration of al-Ghawrī's titles[796] and in numerous literary works produced in

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782   Dekkiche, Source 247; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18. See also, e.g., Newhall, *Patronage* 67; Little, Religion 170–1; Lev, *Charity* 79; Frenkel, *Culture* 16; Fuess, Politics 100; Petry, *Protectors* 30; Meloy, *Power* 1; Muslu, *Ottomans* 8–9, 135.

783   On the complex interplay between the Mamluk rulers and the Sharīfs, see Meloy, *Power*; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 19–20, 22.

784   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 19. See also Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 5–6, 79, 147, 164–5; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 343.

785   Dekkiche, Source 247.

786   Lewis, Khādim al-Ḥaramayn 899–900. See also van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18; Muslu, *Ottomans* 8–9; Aigle, Les Inscriptions 65–6.

787   Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 120. See also Veinstein, Serviteur 229.

788   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 46.

789   Lewis, Khādim al-Ḥaramayn 900.

790   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 8.

791   Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

792   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 13552, 13608; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 134–5.

793   Sobernheim, Inschriften 26–7.

794   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 13660.

795   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 17611.

796   Baumgarten, Travels 370.

the context of al-Ghawrī's court, including *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,[797] *al-Kawkab al-durrī*,[798] *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*,[799] *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*,[800] and *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*.[801] This suggests that al-Ghawrī's status as *khādim al-ḥaramayn* played a special role in the religious and political culture of his court.

In addition to the two traditional Islamic means of affirming rule over a given territory, that is, issuing coins[802] and mentioning the ruler's name during the Friday prayer,[803] we can identify four performative ways to establish and enact suzerainty over the Hijaz that were especially important in Mamluk times:[804] (1) construction activities; (2) the *kiswa*; (3) the *maḥmal*; and (4) the sultan's presence in Mecca, in person or through proxies.

(1) As van Steenbergen noted, "the Mecca sanctuary and the maintenance of its public buildings and services have always continued to be extremely important for those claiming some form of legitimate Muslim leadership."[805] Hence, building projects there can be understood concomitantly as expressions of piety and as assertions of exalted political rank.[806] As such, they were of particular value to sovereigns who could not be present in the holy cities in person. The Sharīfī rulers, well aware of the gain in legitimacy that construction in Mecca and Medina entailed for distant leaders, but also sensitive to the doubts that such projects could raise regarding their own authority, made sure that they would benefit significantly from every construction project. Foreign rulers had to provide them with gifts equal to the costs of the edifices they wanted to erect in Mecca or Medina.[807] Given that building projects in the remote region of the Hijaz were already very expensive without this additional financial burden,[808] every edifice erected was witness to its commissioner's pious determination and affluence.

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797   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224, 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 105, 110–1.
798   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
799   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, 1ᵛ.
800   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 1ʳ.
801   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193ᵛ, 241ʳ, 320ᵛ.
802   On the minting of coins in Mecca in late Mamluk times, see Meloy, Money; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18.
803   On the mentioning of the Mamluk ruler's name in Mecca, see Dekkiche, Source 266–9; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 15–6.
804   This list builds in part on Dekkiche, Source 248, 257.
805   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 13.
806   Newhall, *Patronage* 4. See also Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 126, 184–5.
807   Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 7–8.
808   Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 93.

Accordingly, the symbolic meaning of al-Ghawrī's building projects in Mecca went far beyond the mere construction of a few buildings, especially since the sultan not only improved the city's water supply and took care of its poor, but also ensured that the city's main mosque and the immediate vicinity of the Kaʿba were in optimal condition. Through these architectural projects, the sultan signaled to Muslim pilgrims from throughout the Islamicate ecumene that he was a pious ruler ready to serve as protector of Islam—and that he had the means to do so. The fact that the sultan tiled the space for the circumambulation around the Kaʿba and commemorated this renovation with a long inscription that identified him as its commissioner is clear evidence of these communicative goals.[809]

Similarly, al-Ghawrī's investments in the pilgrimage route went far beyond the usual infrastructure upkeep that Islamicate political theory demanded from rulers.[810] While these projects were certainly important for the security and comfort of pilgrims, they also bore considerable symbolic significance, as Jacques Jomier pointed out already in 1953.[811] In addition to serving as manifestations of al-Ghawrī's piety, wealth, largesse, and guardianship of the pilgrimage, the inns and outposts constructed along the pilgrimage route also established a symbolic connection between Cairo, the residence of the sultan's court, and Mecca and Medina, the centers of the Islamic religious cosmos. Cairo and Mecca, although separated by hundreds of miles, a dangerous sea, and forbidding deserts, became symbolically linked through the sultan's outposts. Far more than mere resting stops, this chain of edifices sponsored by the sultan established a direct conjunction between—from a Mamluk perspective—the political and the religious centers of the world. At the same time, they signaled that al-Ghawrī was the sole legitimate ruler of these central hubs of the Islamicate ecumene.

(2) The *kiswa* is an object made of black cloth and dispatched to Mecca every year during the pilgrimage season to cover the Kaʿba.[812] Since early Islamic times, sending it was the prerogative of the supreme ruler of the Islamicate world, and in pre-Mamluk times, it was usually dispatched by the caliphs of

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809   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1808–12.

810   Cf. Crone, *Thought* 206. See also al-Ṭarsūsī, *Tuḥfat* 107; Karateke, Legitimizing 50; Black, *History* 92; Martel-Thoumian, *Gouvernement* 291–3, 301.

811   Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 170.

812   Dekkiche, Source 257–8. There were two *kiswa*s, an outer one covering the exterior of the Kaʿba and an inner one used within this structure. Here, we deal only with the more prominent outer *kiswa*. On the inner *kiswa*, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 57, 276; Dekkiche, Source 249, 261–3; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 105.

Baghdad or Cairo.[813] The symbolic significance of the *kiswa* can hardly be over-stated, as it constituted one of the "most powerful symbol[s] of a ruler's ascendancy or claim for ascendancy over the holy cities."[814] Since the first Mamluk ruler sent the *kiswa* in 661/1263, the Egyptian sultans devoted considerable economic and social capital to retaining this prerogative. Such heavy investments were necessary, as other rulers also sought to benefit from the great communicative potential of the *kiswa* and to provide the veil for the Kaʿba.[815] In al-Ghawrī's time, the Ottomans' ambitions to challenge Mamluk authority over the Hijaz became particularly clear when, three years before the battle of Marj Dābiq, Sultan Selīm sent an Ottoman *kiswa* to counter that sent by the Mamluks.[816] Earlier in 917/1511, the Mamluks' other major transregional rivals, the Safawids, had done the same.[817] The Mamluk *kiswa*s sent to counter the schemes of these and other rivals typically featured the emblems of the reigning Mamluk ruler, and thus established a direct and easily observable link between the object and the person of the sultan. Moreover, Mamluk rulers made sure that each new *kiswa* would have the greatest communicative impact possible by having it placed over the Kaʿba on the 10th of Dhū l-Ḥijja, that is, at the height of the pilgrimage season.[818]

(3) The only object that rivaled the *kiswa* as an emblem of suzerainty over the sanctuaries of the Hijaz was a palanquin carried by a camel and known as the *maḥmal*. The sending of a *maḥmal* to Mecca most probably dates back to ʿAbbasid times,[819] although Mamluk authors maintained that the first *maḥmal* was dispatched in 664/1266 by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77), thus styling the palanquin as a specifically Mamluk object.[820]

Unlike the *kiswa*, which fulfilled a religious function as the veil of the Kaʿba, the *maḥmal* was foremost an object of symbolic political communication, as it

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813 Dekkiche, Source 248. On the *kiswa*, see also Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 277–84.

814 Dekkiche, Source 248.

815 Dekkiche, Source 248–9. See also Dekkiche, Source 259–62; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 21; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 14, 18; Schimmel, Sufismus 275–6; Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 120; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 28–9; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 38; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 15.

816 Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 18.

817 Clifford, Observations 264. See also Lellouch, *Ottomans* 26; and for a later Safawid *kiswa*, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 262.

818 Dekkiche, Source 258–9.

819 Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 89.

820 Dekkiche, Source 263–4. See also Meloy, Celebrating 406. On the origin of the *maḥmal*, see, e.g., von Grunebaum, *Festivals* 38; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 16; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 87, 89–92; Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 20–6; Meloy, Celebrating 406–7.

represented the absent Mamluk sultan himself.[821] Hence, the Sharīfī rulers of Mecca were expected to meet it at the outskirts of the city and kiss the hoof of the camel carrying it as a sign of submission to Mamluk rule.[822] The political meaning of the object is underlined by the fact that rival rulers began sending *maḥmal*s to Mecca as well; however, these were treated with less deference than the Egyptian one.[823]

The Egyptian *maḥmal* acquired symbolic significance even before it reached Mecca with the pilgrimage caravan.[824] Before leaving for the Hijaz, the *maḥmal* figured in lavishly arranged parades that traversed Cairo and marked the climax of its elaborate departure ceremony.[825] For inhabitants of Cairo who did not travel to Mecca, these ceremonies were one of the most direct ways to participate in the annual pilgrimage rites.[826] Moreover, van Steenbergen suggested that these "elaborate departure ceremonials [...] symbolically connected the [Mamluk] court to the ritual performances in and around Mecca."[827] This interpretation seems fully justified given that key members of the sultan's court society played important roles in the departure ceremony, which constituted a courtly event of great communicative significance. Customarily the *maḥmal* parade took place at the beginning of the second half of Rajab,[828] and could include carnivalesque elements and fireworks, as well as demonstrations of Mamluk military prowess in the form of lancers riding with the *maḥmal* and performing stunts on horseback, although this practice was discontinued after 871/1467.[829]

Al-Ghawrī's reign offers unique opportunities to study the religious, cultural, and political significance of the *maḥmal* in Mamluk times, as the cloth covering of a *maḥmal* produced during his reign and preserved in Istanbul constitutes the only known surviving premodern specimen of this type of object. Made of

821   Cf. for the political significance of the *maḥmal* already Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 16; Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 3, 10, 28, 204.

822   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 277. See also Meloy, Celebrating 408; Meloy, *Power* 15; Dekkiche, Source 264.

823   Dekkiche, Source 265–6. See also van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18–9; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 89–90; Schimmel, Glimpses 365; Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 42–56; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 15; Veinstein, Serviteur 231.

824   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 276. See also Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 16.

825   Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 87; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Voile 17–8. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 57–8; Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 54–5; Irwin, Journey 139.

826   Dekkiche, Source 264.

827   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18.

828   Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 70.

829   Schimmel, Glimpses 367. See also Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 70–2; Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 35–42; Meloy, Celebrating; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 39–41; Irwin, Journey 139, 142.

yellow satin[830]—the emblematic color of the Mamluk Sultanate[831]—it is in the shape of a cuboid crowned by a pyramid and bearing several inscriptions.[832] These inscriptions include al-Ghawrī's full name, his customary title *mawlānā l-sulṭān* (our lord the sultan), and the traditional formula *ʿazza naṣruhu* (may his victory be glorious) on all four sides. The unmistakable relationship between the *maḥmal* and the sultan was clear from the inscriptions: From every side, the *maḥmal* clearly represented none other than al-Ghawrī.

The close relationship between the sultan and the *maḥmal* was made even more apparent in the main inscription, which was formulated in the first person and conveyed the impression that al-Ghawrī was speaking directly to its readers. The first two lines of the four-line main inscription are as follows:

> I asked God, my Lord, each day we have been alive [that we may] visit the land of the origin [of Islam] so that we [could] see the Kaʿba as a manifestation of [His] mercy, safely perform the circumambulation around it and the running ritual, and fulfill [our] obligation [toward God] so that the Lord on the throne may be satisfied, and [so] that we belong fully to the master [that is, Muḥammad], upon whom the blessing of my Lord be repeated every day till the day of judgment.[833]

The text continues with an almost indecipherable line that Jacques Jomier interprets as a prayer for blessing.[834] The final line clearly asks for the intercession of the Prophet Muḥammad.[835]

The inscription established a close link between the *maḥmal* and Sultan al-Ghawrī, who is presented as desiring to fulfill the pilgrimage rites in person. Unable to do so, the ruler sent the *maḥmal* in his place as a demonstration of his pious longing. In light of this inscription and the repeated mention of al-Ghawrī's name, the *maḥmal* can be seen as a token of the sultan's continuous presence among the pilgrims.[836] Moreover, it symbolically buttressed the sultan's claims of custodianship of the Meccan sanctuary. The significance of the palanquin is also corroborated by the fact that the Ottomans, when conquering

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830   Meloy, *Power* 14.

831   Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 89.

832   Cf. Jomier, *Le maḥmal* plate I. See also Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 11–2.

833   Arabic text Jomier, Le maḥmal 185–6. Translation partly based on Jomier, Le maḥmal 185–6; Meloy, *Power* 14.

834   Jomier, Le maḥmal 186, 188.

835   Jomier, Le maḥmal 188.

836   See also Meloy, *Power* 14; Meloy, Celebrating 408–9.

the Mamluk lands, considered al-Ghawrī's *maḥmal* such an important symbol of Mamluk rule over the Hijaz that they locked it away in the treasury of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, where it remains to the present day.[837]

Al-Ghawrī's communicative use of the *maḥmal* did not end when his name and pious formulas were written on it and it was sent to Mecca on his behalf. With other, non-Meccan and non-pilgrim audiences in mind, early in his reign the sultan recognized the outstanding symbolic significance of the *maḥmal* departure ceremony and so transformed it into one of the primary instruments by which to represent himself as a pious ruler and protector of Islam. While Ibn Iyās' accounts of the first three departure ceremonies of the *maḥmal* from Cairo during al-Ghawrī's reign suggest that these were rather low-profile events, as was typical for the late Mamluk period,[838] the chronicler indicates that in 909/1503, the sultan devised a plan to tap the full communicative potential of this event. To this end, he reestablished the earlier practice of having mounted lancers escort the *maḥmal* through the streets of Cairo. During the parades, these cavalrymen demonstrated their abilities with various stunts—something the crowds of Cairo had not witnessed for a generation.[839] Previously, the sultan had selected five *amīr*s and forty members of his *khāṣṣakiyya* to practice their stunts over several weeks on a special training ground.[840] Later, al-Ghawrī examined their skills in his *maydān* before allowing them to participate in the *maḥmal* parade.[841] Although some veterans belittled the skills of the sultan's lancer squad,[842] their show during the *maḥmal* parade in Rajab 909/December 1505 was apparently a resounding success for the sultan, who had the city decorated for this occasion. After a fireworks display the night before, the lancers paraded twice through the city together with the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal*. According to Ibn Iyās, the inhabitants of Cairo were so delighted by the spectacle that they danced and composed commemorative verses. Apparently pleased with this outcome, the sultan bestowed robes of honor on the *amīr*s participating in the parade and even Ibn Iyās acknowledged that the sultan's revivification of the lancers' performances had to be counted among his good deeds.[843] Unsurprisingly, the sultan had the lancers perform the following year,

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837   Jomier, Le maḥmal 183.
838   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 6–7, 28, 50.
839   On this practice, see Ayalon, Notes 47–53.
840   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 59–60. See also Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 41; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 65.
841   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 60.
842   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 60. See also Ayalon, Notes 45.
843   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 61.

too.[844] In later years, the departure parade of the *maḥmal* included other spectacular elements, such as decorated elephants.[845]

Ibn Iyās suggests that the sultan reestablished this form of the *maḥmal* parade in order to be remembered as the ruler who had renewed it.[846] While plausible in itself, this interpretation seems to ignore other, more immediate communicative purposes. Given that the sultan had his lancers parade through the city twice, he apparently wanted to make sure that their skills were observed by as many people as possible. This suggests that these parades were of communicative significance and that their target audience was the population of the capital city. What, however, did the sultan try to communicate? Several answers to this question are possible. It seems to be of special importance that the sultan, by establishing his corps of lancers, formed a corps of elite soldiers who escorted the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa*, that is, two objects closely connected to the central Islamic rite of the pilgrimage. By setting up this unit and staging a parade through the streets of Cairo, the sultan arguably demonstrated to his subjects that he was willing and able to guarantee the security of the sanctuaries of the Hijaz and those undertaking the pilgrimage there.

Moreover, there is evidence that the reestablishment of the lancer squad was also targeted at audiences outside the Mamluk realm. In 914/1509, the sultan arranged for a display of the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal* for an envoy of the Turkmen ruler of Baghdad. Ibn Iyās provides little information on this courtly event, but states that the sultan had his lancers perform in front of the envoy.[847] In combination with the presence of the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal*, their performance must be understood as an effort to dramatize several interrelated dimensions of Mamluk claims of religious and political supremacy on the occasion of the envoy's visit, including Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz as symbolized by the *maḥmal*, Mamluk concern for the central Islamic rite of the pilgrimage as represented by the *kiswa*, and finally, Mamluk military prowess, as demonstrated by the squad of lancers. Hence, we see that the sultan also relied on the lancers in transregional communications with other Islamicate courts.

(4) In addition to performative enactments of their suzerainty over Mecca through the construction of buildings and the sending of objects of symbolic significance, Mamluk sultans also used their physical presence as a means to maintain and display their special relationship with the Islamic sanctuaries. Since Mamluk rulers usually could not leave Cairo for long periods, they typic-

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844   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 70, 72.
845   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 288. See also Petry, *Protectors* 161.
846   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 60. See also Petry, *Protectors* 191.
847   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145. See also Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 41; and in general Muslu, *Ottomans* 58.

ally did not undertake the pilgrimage themselves,[848] but rather sent representatives.[849] Prominent among the latter was the annually appointed commander of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan known as *amīr al-ḥajj* who usually belonged to the upper echelons of the Mamluk military.[850] As the political representative of the Mamluk ruler, the *amīr al-ḥajj* had to negotiate the details of Mamluk suzerainty and Sharīfī local authority with the heads of the Meccan political elite.[851] Moreover, the commander of the pilgrimage caravan had to "trauell with maiesticall pompe and costly diet"[852] as Leo Africanus remarked, thus displaying his ruler's rank.[853]

Furthermore, the *amīr al-ḥajj* was instrumental in the efforts of Mamluk rulers to ensure that the pilgrims under their protection could perform the journey to and from Mecca, and fulfill their ritual duties there safely. Already in early Islamic times, guaranteeing the security of pilgrims was one of the most important tasks of rulers, as sayings attributed to the Prophet's Companions and other early authorities demonstrate.[854] The same notion is almost omnipresent in later texts on the duties of Muslim rulers.[855] Hence, rulers who failed to guard the pilgrimage caravans against external threats while under their protection and who proved unable to provide pilgrims with what they needed risked suffering a considerable blow to their claims for legitimacy and supreme political status.[856] Therefore, the *amīr al-ḥajj* not only had to ensure that sufficient supplies of water and food were available, but also had to secure safe conduct through negotiations with Bedouin tribes who controlled much of the territory the pilgrims traversed.[857]

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848   Only four reigning Mamluk sultans undertook the pilgrimage, cf. Dekkiche, Source 257; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 18, 20–3. On members of the military as pilgrims, see Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 243–5.

849   There is no evidence that Mamluk rulers sent substitutes to perform the pilgrimage in their stead, although Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 249 indicates that this legal possibility was known at the late Mamluk court.

850   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 27.

851   Dekkiche, Source 256–7.

852   Africanus, *History* iii, 896.

853   See also Schimmel, Glimpses 366.

854   Kister, Concepts 102, 125. See also Kennedy, *Caliphate* 211.

855   E.g., Winter, Competition 208; Drews, *Karolinger* 413; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* ii, 589; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 293–5, 300; al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 40, 44, 139–44; al-Ṭarsūsī, *Tuḥfat* 107–8.

856   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 15.

857   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 27. On the *amīr al-ḥajj* and the organization of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan, see also Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 74–92; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 6, 33–5, 59; ʿAnkawi, Pilgrimage 146–8, 151–66; Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 56–9.

In the later Mamluk period, the court elite explored other ways, in addition to the office of *amīr al-ḥajj*, of representing the sultan's rule over the Hijaz. A key, novel strategy was the pilgrimage of the ruler's principal wife and possibly other family members. This practice of employing a "spousal proxy"[858] to enact, project, and reaffirm the sultan's rule over the Hijaz was first used under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in the early eighth/fourteenth century, but only gained momentum about one hundred years later when the consorts of sultans began to perform the pilgrimage regularly,[859] thereby typically displaying extraordinary luxury and largesse.[860]

Likewise, al-Ghawrī used this strategy of symbolic representation when his wife[861] performed the pilgrimage together with the sultan's approximately ten-year-old son Muḥammad in 920/1514–5.[862] This was, possibly, a measure to curb Ottoman and Safawid attempts to act as supreme authority over the *ḥajj*, which materialized, inter alia, in the act of sending rival *kiswas*.[863]

Ibn Iyās provides ample information on how the population of Cairo perceived the *ḥajj* of the sultan's wife and son, although as usual, he is less well informed about the internal court dynamics behind it. The sultan's family members traveled in an extraordinarily sizable pilgrimage caravan, together with other high-ranking members of al-Ghawrī's court society. In this year, the *maḥmal* parade was so spectacular that Ibn Iyās noted that "absolutely nothing like it had happened in the previous years."[864] The *amīr*s in charge of the caravan's safety left Cairo with their cavalrymen in festive squadrons (sg. *ṭulb*). The *ṭulb* of the sultan's son Muḥammad carried with it sultanic banners, thus highlighting his role as his father's representative. In addition to decorated horses and weapons, Muḥammad's *ṭulb* included about twenty bedecked camels carrying household items. After Muḥammad's belongings came the lavish litter of

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858 Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 23. See also D'hulster and van Steenbergen, Family 64.

859 Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 23. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 92–6; Schimmel, Glimpses 368–9.

860 Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 93. See also Johnson, Pilgrims, *passim*.

861 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 27–8, mentions a woman called "Jān-i Sukkār al-Jarkasiyya" as having given birth to a son of the sultan, but it is unclear whether she is the same woman as the one who undertook the pilgrimage, as Ibn Iyās does not mention the latter's name in his account of her trip to Mecca.

862 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 409, 440. On the role of the sultan's son, see Mauder, Rule 171–2, 178–9.

863 Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 24 (on the Ottomans). On earlier Ottoman attempts to establish authority over the pilgrimage, see van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 25; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 102; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1888; Schimmel, Glimpses 367–8.

864 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 409.

the sultan's wife which allegedly cost more than 20,000 *dīnār*s, followed by her household items, including a huge portable copper bathtub.[865]

According to Ibn Iyās, an Ottoman envoy and countless *amīr*s, soldiers, and common people came to see the parade when it traversed through Cairo. The litter of the sultan's wife attracted special attention, given that the litters of earlier consorts of sultans departing on the pilgrimage had not been carried through Cairo. Thus, the departure ceremony of al-Ghawrī's wife constituted in this sense an unprecedented courtly event, although rumors said that the sultan's wife was not actually in her litter during the parade. The sultan observed the parade from the citadel and afterwards bestowed valuable robes of honor on its *amīr*s, including his son.[866]

The departure of the pilgrimage caravan in Shawwāl 920/December 1514 constituted a ceremony of outstanding communicative significance. With its displays of the sultan's wealth and the participation of a substantial part of the Mamluk military, it was well-suited to demonstrate both al-Ghawrī's command over seemingly infinite economic capital and his ability to defend the pilgrimage caravan against external dangers. Moreover, the military component is noteworthy, as al-Ghawrī performed his military expedition to Alexandria, discussed above, shortly after the departure of the pilgrim caravan;[867] thus, he successfully demonstrated the Mamluk army's ability to conduct two military operations more or less simultaneously.

However, the most outstanding feature of the departure ceremony was clearly the participation of the sultan's wife and son. In particular, the unmistakable visual sign of the sultanic banners clearly marked al-Ghawrī's son as his representative. By sending members of his own family to the Hijaz, the sultan performatively reaffirmed and enacted his suzerainty over Mecca and Medina, with all the positive consequences that this entailed with regard to his claims of piety, religious legitimacy, and political supremacy.[868]

By staging a major parade through Cairo, the sultan and those around him made sure that these messages were communicated to the largest audience possible. The fact that the sultan deviated from the traditional pattern of caravan departure ceremonies by having his wife's litter paraded through the city

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865 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 409–12. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* i, 381; ii, 264; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322–3; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 208; al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 198–9; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1949, 1961; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 94; Schimmel, *Glimpses* 368–9; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 71; Petry, *Protectors* 162; Johnson, Pilgrims 124–6.

866 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 410–1. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 94; Johnson, Pilgrims 125–7.

867 Cf. section 2.1.2.3 above.

868 For a similar interpretation, see also Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 95.

underscores that he sought to maximize the communicative impact of the event. The intended audience was not limited to his subjects, but also included an Ottoman envoy and thus, indirectly, the Ottoman ruling elite around Sultan Selīm, whom the Mamluks could expect to inquire about the military and economic situation on the envoy's return. Through this lavish departure ceremony, al-Ghawrī sent a strong message to Selīm, who had challenged Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz.[869]

Furthermore, by sending his son and wife as his representatives, the sultan also substantiated his claim for, at a minimum, indirect rule over Mecca vis-à-vis the Sharīfī ruler. The Meccan ruler seems to have understood this signal and did his best to ensure good relations with al-Ghawrī. Upon the caravan's arrival in Mecca, the local Sharīfī ruler Barakāt (r. 903–31/1497–1525, with interruptions) paid homage to the sultan's son Muḥammad by dismounting from his horse, taking the bridle of Muḥammad's mount, and escorting the boy on foot, together with the *amīr al-ḥajj*, into the city in a lavish parade. This behavior was considered highly unusual, as was the fact that Barakāt had the litter of the sultan's wife carried into the city on the shoulders of members of the local nobility. Thereafter, Barakāt and other Meccans sent valuable gifts to Muḥammad and the sultan's wife.[870]

Barakāt tried to make the stay of the sultan's family members in Mecca as enjoyable as possible. In an unusual move,[871] the Sharīfī ruler even escorted the sultan's wife and his son back to Cairo as part of the return caravan, which arrived in Muḥarram 921/February 1515. When they reached the outskirts of Cairo, the prominent *amīr*s in the city and its notables went out to welcome them. As mentioned, the sultan's son spent his first night in the city in al-Ghawrī's *madrasa*.[872]

On the day after the caravan's arrival, the sultan staged a reception ceremony in full ceremonial dress in the citadel courtyard with all the high-ranking *amīr*s and leading members of the court society in attendance. From al-Ghawrī's *madrasa*, the sultan's son rode to the citadel together with Barakāt, the latter's son, and son-in-law. All of them were wearing robes of honor that the sultan had sent them in advance. When they reached the gate of the citadel,

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869   On the envoy, see also Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 94.

870   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 432–3. See also al-Sinjārī, *Manā'iḥ* iii 199; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1969; Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 94.

871   Cf. for this evaluation van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 24. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mut'at al-adhhān* i, 323; Meloy, *Power* 230.

872   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 436, 439. See also al-Sinjārī, *Manā'iḥ* iii, 199; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1970, 1976; Johnson, Pilgrims 127.

they dismounted as was usual for visitors to the citadel. However, Muḥammad b. Qāniṣawh then mounted his horse again and continued his way up to the citadel courtyard on horseback with the Sharīf Barakāt and the *amīr al-ḥajj* holding the bridle of his horse, just as they had done when the sultan's son had entered Mecca. The latter dismounted again on arriving in the citadel courtyard and entered together with Barakāt. The sultan, who was seated on a platform in the courtyard, rose a little, but without standing up completely to welcome the Sharīfī ruler. Ibn Iyās' account is not entirely clear regarding the following events, yet apparently the sultan's son and the *amīr*s present—but not Barakāt—then kissed the ground in front of the sultan. The sultan bestowed robes of honor on his guests, and apparently gave the most valuable one to Barakāt. After receiving their robes, the Sharīf and his relatives descended from the citadel with an escort of high-ranking *amīr*s who brought them to their residence in the vicinity of the sultan's *madrasa*.[873] Over the following weeks, the sultan entertained the ruler of Mecca with banquets,[874] an outing,[875] performances of the sultan's lancers who usually escorted the *maḥmal*,[876] other displays of Mamluk military ability,[877] a celebration of the Prophet's birthday,[878] a fireworks display,[879] and an elephant show.[880] After about two months, the sultan awarded Barakāt another robe of honor, sent him valuable gifts, and granted him permission to return to Mecca.[881] Moreover, the sultan confirmed Barakāt's position as *amīr* of Mecca and appointed him administrator of the port city of al-Yanbūʿ in the vicinity of Medina. The latter reciprocated the sultan's generosity by accepting Mamluk suzerainty and swearing on the Quran of ʿUthmān that he would always obey and never betray al-Ghawrī.[882] Shortly thereafter, he left Cairo for the Hijaz, together with a group of pilgrims.[883]

The Sharīf's trip to Cairo, his reception at the citadel, and his subsequent sojourn in the Egyptian capital constituted an elaborate performative affirma-

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873   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 439–41. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1976–7, 1981–3; Johnson, Pilgrims 127.

874   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 442, 445, 449, 455. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1985.

875   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 442.

876   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 445–6.

877   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 448–9, 455. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1982.

878   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 447.

879   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 448.

880   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 448.

881   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 455–6. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1989–90.

882   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 457. See also Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1989; Meloy, *Power* 231.

883   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 459. See also al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 200–1; Petry, *Protectors* 42.

tion and representation of Mamluk suzerainty over Mecca and it surroundings. By escorting the sultan's wife and son, Barakāt had already demonstrated his respect for the Mamluk ruler. During his reception at the citadel, he further displayed his willingness to accept al-Ghawrī's supreme position by donning a robe of honor that the sultan had sent. Moreover, together with the sultan's son and the *amīr al-ḥajj*, he reenacted his earlier gesture of submission when he held the bridle of the horse of the sultan's son. For his part, al-Ghawrī recognized Barakāt's special status by rising a little to welcome his guest and, it appears, by sparing him the submissive gesture of kissing the ground.

In light of the following sequence of courtly events in which Barakāt took part, we can interpret the Sharīf's reception at the citadel as a ritual that transformed Barakāt's status from a foreigner into a temporary member of al-Ghawrī's court society. As such, he participated in numerous court events in which the wealth, largesse, military might, and cultural sophistication of the Mamluks were fully displayed. His sojourn in Cairo ended with a ceremony in which he confirmed his status as the sultan's servant by pledging an oath on a Quran copy, an act that was, in the Mamluk period, the most binding form of contractual obligation. Even outsiders of the court, such as Ibn Iyās, learned about this event, which constituted a performative reaffirmation of Meccan acceptance of Mamluk suzerainty by means of one of the strongest religious symbols known to premodern Muslims.

While the pilgrimage of his wife and son was in many ways a success in al-Ghawrī's efforts to maintain and corroborate his status as custodian of the holy cities, their *ḥajj* did not completely take place without criticism, as Ibn Iyās noted. According to the chronicler, none of the pilgrims who accompanied al-Ghawrī's wife and son to Mecca said anything good about them, as they failed to perform any generous acts toward their fellow pilgrims, such as the customary distribution of sweetmeats. Ibn Iyās blamed al-Ghawrī's stinginess for this behavior.[884] However, the Egyptian chronicler's criticism must be counterbalanced with the information provided by the Meccan chronicler, Ibn Fahd, who mentions that along with his wife and son, al-Ghawrī sent robes of honor and new furniture for Mecca's main mosque. Moreover, 660 *dīnār*s were distributed as alms and gifts on their behalf in the city. Thus, contrary to Ibn Iyās, there is evidence that some display of the sultan's largesse took place in Mecca during the pilgrimage.[885]

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884   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 441. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Legend 93; Schimmel, Glimpses 369; Petry, *Protectors* 162; Johnson, Pilgrims 127–9.

885   Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1967–8. On the sojourn of the sultan's wife and son

Ibn Iyās' criticism about the behavior of al-Ghawrī's wife notwithstanding, our analysis so far has focused on the sultan's largely successful communicative efforts to enact and reaffirm his suzerainty over the Hijaz and on the gains in religious and political status that these acts entailed. Yet, there is also another side of the story, one that highlights the threats to Mamluk dominion over the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina and suggests that much of al-Ghawrī's communicative campaign to corroborate his at least indirect rule over Mecca should be seen as a response to these challenges.

As seen above, the early years of al-Ghawrī's reign were marked by a period of extended political instability in the Hijaz, with heated infighting among various members of the Sharīfī dynasty and their allies, prompting the Mamluks to dispatch military expeditions to Mecca and its surroundings. The historical context of these developments is summarized above and need not detain us here.[886] Rather, our focus lies now on the impact of these events on the pilgrimage and especially on the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan. The safety of the latter was of central importance for how the population in the Mamluk capital perceived the situation in the Hijaz. Here, Ibn Iyās' work gives us direct insights into the ways a person outside al-Ghawrī's court society perceived and evaluated the situation.

Ibn Iyās addresses the situation in the Hijaz under al-Ghawrī for the first time in detail in his account of the events of Muḥarram 908/July 1502, when returning pilgrims brought news about the turmoil on the route to the sanctuaries. According to them, before it entered Mecca the Damascene caravan had been attacked and plundered by Bedouins allied to one of the Sharīfī contenders, who had killed the men and enslaved women and children.[887] Likewise, the main Egyptian pilgrimage caravan carrying the sultanic *maḥmal* was attacked on its return voyage by one of the Sharīfī factions. In the fighting that ensued, approximately 100 members of its military escort were killed and the civilian members of the caravan were robbed of all their belongings, including the garments the female pilgrims were wearing. Therefore, most caravan members decided to cancel their travel on the dangerous land route and return to Egypt by ship. Those who continued their journey by land discovered that the watering stations along the way had been intentionally destroyed by one of the warring factions. Consequently, many pilgrims perished, while the sur-

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in the Hijaz, see Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Bulūgh al-qirā* iii, 1963–9; and on their almsgiving, see al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr* 153.

886   Cf. sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2. See also Meloy, *Power* 205–18.

887   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 35–6.

vivors were blackmailed by Bedouins for protection money.[888] In a word, the pilgrimage season was an outright disaster for everyone involved in protecting the Egyptian and the Syrian caravans, including al-Ghawrī as their supreme guardian.

The situation did not improve over the following months, with the warring factions fighting in the city of Mecca itself, looting houses, and killing civilians in such numbers that Ibn Iyās wrote that "Mecca was almost completely destroyed."[889] The chronicler likened the situation to the Qarmatian attack on Mecca in the fourth/tenth century, during which the black stone of the Kaʿba had been stolen, causing a hiatus in the proper performance of the pilgrimage for a period of almost twenty years.[890] Al-Ghawrī reacted to this news by sending a large expeditionary force of 600 soldiers under the leadership of the commander-in-chief, Qayt al-Rajabī, with the pilgrimage caravan leaving in 908/1503.[891] Nevertheless, the Mamluk authorities considered the situation so dangerous that they forbade women to participate in the pilgrimage that year.[892]

The level of tension and concern that the sultan and the people of Cairo felt regarding the security of the pilgrimage caravan became apparent when, a few months later, news arrived in Cairo that Qayt al-Rajabī and his forces had dispelled the Bedouin marauders and imprisoned several of the fighting Sharīfī rivals. Ibn Iyās writes:

> When the sultan had verified that this [news] was true, he gave orders to beat the drums in the citadel and at the doors of the *amīr*s, and ordered [that it be] announced in Cairo that [the city] should be decorated for seven days. It was decorated lavishly so that the people even decorated the inner parts of the markets and it remained decorated for seven days. The people were beside themselves with happiness and their joy was beyond all boundaries.[893]

Upon their return in early 909/late 1503, the people welcomed the pilgrims and especially the commander-in-chief, Qayt al-Rajabī, with great joy.[894] It

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888   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 37–8. See also Clifford, Observations 260; Meloy, *Power* 211.
889   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 48.
890   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 47–8. See also Clifford, Observations 260–1; Meloy, *Power* 212.
891   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 48–9.
892   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 50. See also Schimmel, Glimpses 368.
893   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 54. See also Petry, *Protectors* 41; Meloy, *Power* 212–3.
894   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 56–7.

was in precisely this situation that the sultan decided to reestablish the lancer squad and parade it through Cairo, together with the *maḥmal*, thus drawing maximum attention to his military protection of the pilgrimage.[895] The mood of the population of Cairo rose even more when soldiers from the Mamluk garrison in Mecca killed the faction leader responsible for the city-wide attack that Ibn Iyās had likened to that of the Qarmatians.[896] Still, for security reasons, women were not allowed to join the next pilgrimage caravan, which, however, returned safely.[897] Consequently, the caravan in 910/1505 apparently again included women among its members.[898] Although the caravan suffered from thirst and the death of riding animals, the pilgrims performed their rites safely that year and did not experience any political unrest.[899]

Nevertheless, there were indicators that the situation in the Hijaz was not entirely stable. The Sharīfī leaders imprisoned by Qayt al-Rajabī, including the local ruler Barakāt, who several years later accompanied al-Ghawrī's wife and son back to Cairo, had fled and were on their way back to the Hijaz.[900] Subsequently, hostilities broke out again in 911/1505 and al-Ghawrī had to send another expeditionary force to the Hijaz.[901] Moreover, a new danger had appeared in the Red Sea region, as Portuguese ships had circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope and endangered sea traffic around the Arabian Peninsula, as well as its port cities, thus forcing the Mamluks into military action, as discussed above.[902] In this situation, the sultan appointed the leaders of the pilgrimage caravan as usual in Shaʿbān 911/January 1506,[903] but was evidently uncertain whether he should send the pilgrims off.

Thanks to al-Sharīf's *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we have unique insights into the deliberations of the sultan and his closest intimates as to whether or not to dispatch the pilgrimage caravan. Al-Sharīf recounts, in detail, a *majlis* held in Jumādā I 911/October 1505 that deals almost exclusively with the question of whether the pilgrims should be permitted to travel to Mecca that year.[904] Since some aspects of this section of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are discussed

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895   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 59–60.
896   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 62.
897   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 62, 65.
898   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 76.
899   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 80.
900   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 62. See also al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 146–8, 152–3; Meloy, *Power* 215.
901   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 82.
902   Cf. section 2.1.2.2 above.
903   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 86.
904   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 180–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72–4.

above,[905] we focus here on those passages that deal with al-Ghawrī's role as protector of the ḥajj.

According to al-Sharīf, the conversation began with the sultan asking for news about current events in Cairo. He was told that all the muezzins of the city were supplicating God on his behalf. When he inquired about the reason for this, the sultan first received no answer, but was then informed that the people were worried about the departure of the ḥajj caravan. According to al-Sharīf, the sultan replied laconically, "The caravan goes every year."[906] Then, after what appears in al-Sharīf's account as a pause, the sultan continued: "I want to send these caravans together with an army to Mecca, and [I want to] build a castle in Jidda, and a castle in Yanbūʿ."[907] After being told that the people of Cairo prayed for the success of this project, the sultan asked whether the pilgrimage had ever been canceled. According to al-Sharīf, the reply came in the form of a long historical anecdote about how al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars, the sultan credited in Mamluk sources with sending the first *maḥmal*, established Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz.

According to this narrative, after the Mongols killed the last caliph of Baghdad, the pilgrimage had been interrupted for ten years. Since all the caravans that the Mamluks sent were seized by Bedouins, Baybars decided to send the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal* with an escort of one thousand *mamlūk*s. Consequently, the caravan indeed made its way to Mecca, but there they met another caravan sent by the Mongol Khān Hülegü, who had dispatched his own *kiswa*, together with 10,000 Mongol soldiers. In light of these numbers, the Mongol *kiswa* was put over the Egyptian one. As if this were not enough, the Mongols and the Meccan rulers agreed that they would plunder the Egyptian caravan. In an attempt to prevent this, the Egyptian commander killed the Mongol leader, but the Meccan ruler nevertheless sided with the infidel Mongols and slew many Egyptian Muslims. When all attempts at reconciliation failed, the Egyptian commander returned to Cairo and informed Baybars about what had happened. Consequently, the sultan not only dispatched 7,000 cavalrymen to Mecca, but also joined the ḥajj caravan in person, although that year the Mongols sent 30,000 soldiers to the Hijaz. In Mecca, a battle ensued in which the Mamluk forces were victorious and the Meccan ruler met his death. After the remaining Mongol troops had fled, Baybars' eye fell on an old man of prophetic, that is, Sharīfī descent, who had fought alongside the Egyptian forces. When Baybars learned that the Sharīf had battled against the Meccan ruler because the latter

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905   See section 3.1.5 above.

906   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 181; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72.

907   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 181; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72.

had sided with the infidels, the Mamluk sultan appointed him as his deputy (*nāʾib*) in Mecca. The story ends with the remark that this man was the forefather of the present-day Sharīfī rulers of Mecca.[908]

It goes without saying that this anecdote conflicts with the scholarly historiography of the Mamluk period, which does not know anything about a Mamluk-Mongol battle in Mecca, nor a Mamluk investiture of the Sharīfī dynasty as described in the narrative.[909] Indeed, apart from the point that Sultan Baybars had performed the pilgrimage and was credited with establishing Mamluk suzerainty over Mecca, inter alia, by the sending of the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa*, Mamluk scholarly historiography and the anecdote narrated in al-Ghawrī's *majlis* have almost nothing in common.[910] Nevertheless, the anecdote is of considerable significance for what the person narrating it—be that an unnamed interlocutor in al-Ghawrī's *majlis* or al-Sharīf—wanted to convey to his intended audience, which must have included the sultan.

The passage immediately preceding the anecdote showed that the sultan and those around him were uncertain regarding whether the pilgrimage caravan could be sent that year. Hence, the question of historic precedence arose. Although the previous case of the cancellation of the pilgrimage that the narrator of the anecdote related had taken place 250 years earlier, it was highly relevant to the late Mamluk period for several reasons. First, it suggested that the pilgrimage had been interrupted in the past only in times of utmost political turmoil, such as during the Mongol invasion in the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century. In al-Ghawrī's time, this must have been understood as a strong warning to ensure that the pilgrims could perform their religious duties in Mecca. Otherwise, the sultan's reign would be remembered as a time of great insecurity, on a par with one of the greatest disasters that, from a Mamluk perspective, ever befell the Islamicate world.

Yet, the anecdote also offered advice on how to prevent such a situation, that is, one should simply follow the example of Baybars, who first established Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz. According to the anecdote, Baybars' strategy

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908   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 73–4. For another account of Baybars' conquest of Mecca, see Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 205ʳ–210ʳ.

909   On Mamluk-Ilkhanid competition for the suzerainty over Mecca and Medina, see Becker, *Studien* 383–4; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 100, 102–4, 128.

910   On the establishment of Mamluk suzerainty over Mecca under Baybars according to the historiographical literature, see Jomier, *Le maḥmal* 27–34. The anecdote summarized above is similar to the stories collected in the *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars*. On Mecca and its Sharīfī rulers therein, see Herzog, *Geschichte* 395. According to Herzog, the anecdote does not belong to the core *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Babyars* material.

was very straightforward. He dispatched troops commanded in person by the sultan—troops strong enough to quell all forms of opposition.

The lesson that people in al-Ghawrī's time, including the sultan, could learn was at least twofold: First, if problems appeared in the Hijaz, the Mamluk ruler should follow Baybars' example and lead an army to Mecca to subjugate all insurgents. Second, the Sharīfī rulers of Mecca owed the Mamluk sultans obedience, given that they had been appointed as the latter's deputies by Baybars.

In the context of al-Ghawrī's court, the idea that the ruler should travel in person to Mecca was not as far-fetched as it might appear. First, al-Ghawrī's former master and predecessor Qāytbāy had performed the pilgrimage while in office.[911] Second, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* narrates how al-Ghawrī, when still a rank-and-file soldier, had visited the Hijaz and performed the pilgrimage while on a military mission.[912] Hence, according to this source, the later sultan possessed firsthand military knowledge about the situation in Mecca.[913]

Yet, the sultan did not heed the advice given to him in the anecdote. He did not head an expedition to Mecca, nor did he send troops at the time. Rather, in Shawwāl 911/February–March 1506, when news about heated infighting among local factions arrived from the Hijaz, al-Ghawrī decided to suspend the pilgrimage that year throughout Mamluk territories.[914]

For the Muslim population of the Mamluk Sultanate, the interruption of the pilgrimage was without doubt highly problematic, although Muslims were exempted from the obligation to perform the pilgrimage if the routes to Mecca were known to be unsafe.[915] Nevertheless, Ibn Iyās' evaluation of the situation is clear; he states that "this event was among the greatest disasters and defilements of religion."[916] This proved true; although the sultan sent a *kiswa* and a *maḥmal* by ship to Mecca[917]—without any accompanying pilgrims—these symbols of Mamluk suzerainty arguably became tokens of al-Ghawrī's failure. Toward the end of his entry on the incident, Ibn Iyās again highlighted the historical dimension of what had happened: "From the beginning of the rule of the Turks (*dawlat al-atrāk*) up to the present day, it has never been heard that pilgrims have ever been forbidden to leave for Mecca apart from this year, that is, the year 911."[918] Looking for precedents to illustrate the seriousness of the

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911   Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 22–3.
912   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 69ᵛ–71ʳ.
913   There is no corroboration for al-Ghawrī's sojourn in the Hijaz in any other source.
914   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 89. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 110.
915   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 236.
916   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 89.
917   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 89.
918   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 89. See also Petry, *Protectors* 41.

situation, Ibn Iyās continued with a lengthy flashback to the events of 318/930–1 when the Qarmatians raided Mecca, killed the assembled pilgrims, pillaged the city, filled the Zamzam Well with corpses, and stole the black stone of the Kaʿba.[919] Later in his chronicle, Ibn Iyās again referred to the cancellation of the pilgrimage: "the most distressing affair in this [year] was the cancellation of the pilgrimage […]. The sultan neglected (ahmala) the affairs in the beginning until the riots (fitan) [in Mecca] became more and more intense […] and what has been mentioned above happened."[920]

Given that Ibn Iyās' work is the only extant comprehensive late Mamluk Egyptian chronicle, we are dependent on his evaluation of the situation for our understanding of the consequences of the suspension of the ḥajj. The chronicler is very explicit in his assessment: Not only was the interruption of the pilgrimage a major catastrophe, there was also a clear culprit: Sultan al-Ghawrī, whose negligence had allowed the situation to escalate. Given that the protection of the pilgrimage and the sanctuaries of the Hijaz was of supreme importance for the enactment and justification of Mamluk rule, the suspension of the pilgrimage must have resulted in a major crisis of legitimacy for al-Ghawrī.[921] Similarly, Palmira Brummett described the cancellation of the pilgrimage as "a great embarrassment for the Mamluk ruler whose legitimacy in the Muslim world depended upon his ability to protect pilgrims."[922] Moreover, she noted that "[t]he Mamluk failure to protect the pilgrimage routes was emphasized by the Ottomans in order to bolster their own claims to hegemony in the Islamic world."[923]

How did al-Ghawrī react to this situation? First, the sultan made sure that the interruption of the pilgrimage in 911/1505–6 did not repeat itself. In 912/1506, he dispatched a major Mamluk military force to travel, together with the Mamluk maḥmal and a group of male pilgrims, to Mecca; women were again prohibited from participating in the ḥajj.[924] With the expeditionary force on its way, the sultan, who apparently feared a military revolt in this tense situation, had some of his amīrs renew their oaths of obedience on the ʿUthmānī Quran copy.[925] Soon, news arrived that the Mamluk forces and allied Bedouin troops loyal to the Sharīfī ruler Barakāt had achieved a resounding victory; this pacified the

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919   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 89–90.

920   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 93.

921   See also section 6.1 below.

922   Brummett, Seapower 33. See also Clifford, Observations 261.

923   Brummett, Seapower 165.

924   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 101–2, 104. See also Anonymous, al-Majālis, fols. 323ᵛ–325ᵛ, 328ʳ–329ᵛ.

925   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 101–4.

situation in Mecca. When the people learned about this outcome, Cairo was decorated for seven days in celebration.[926] In light of the earlier discussions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is noteworthy that *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* explicitly likens this triumph to Baybars' conquest of Mecca.[927]

This time, the situation in the Hijaz remained stable with regard to conflicts among the Sharīfī dynasty and its allies. When describing the pilgrimage season of the following year, Ibn Iyās wrote:

> The sultan ordered [that it be] announced in Cairo that the people could perform the pilgrimage without any restrictions this year, both men and women as was customary. Then, voices were raised, wishing blessings [on him], and this was one of the greatest delights [ever experienced] in Islam.[928]

The importance of this positive outcome of the crisis in the Hijaz is also attested to in al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*. Al-Malaṭī counts the reopening of the pilgrimage route among al-Ghawrī's greatest deeds and suggests that the sultan and his troops had prevailed in this case over none other than Satan himself, who was the cause of the strife among the Sharīfī brothers.[929]

Yet, the infighting in the Sharīfī dynasty was not the only factor that endangered the security of the pilgrimage. Portuguese naval activities continued to pose a threat to pilgrims, merchants, and residents of the Arabian Peninsula, and the very messenger that brought news to Cairo about the victory of the Mamluk forces in 912/1507 also informed the sultan that the Europeans had reinforced their naval presence in the region and intensified their attacks on ships manned by Muslims.[930] Even though, for the time, they did not attack Mecca and Medina and their ports, the Portuguese presence had a profound effect on these cities, as prices for essential imported foodstuffs skyrocketed, causing panic among the local population.[931]

As seen above, the Mamluks were unable to mount an efficient resistance against the Portuguese navy and therefore had to rely on Ottoman military support and expertise in their defense of the Arabian Peninsula.[932] That is, the

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926 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 106–7. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 111, 116; al-Sinjārī, *Manāʾiḥ* iii, 154–5; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 320ʳ–323ᵛ; Petry, *Twilight* 154–5; Petry, *Protectors* 41.

927 Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 210ʳ.

928 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 117. See also Petry, *Twilight* 155–6; Petry, *Protectors* 42.

929 Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 3ᵛ.

930 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 109.

931 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 30–1. See also Faroqhi, *Pilgrims* 147.

932 Cf. section 2.1.2.2 above.

Mamluks had to ask for help from their greatest rival for suzerainty over the Hijaz. Although the combined Mamluk-Ottoman forces proved able to defend Mecca, Medina, and their ports against the Portuguese threats, the Mamluks paid a high price. As Brummett argued, al-Ghawrī's situation vis-à-vis the Portuguese attacks must have been "quite desperate," given that his "legitimacy as protector of the Holy Cities came into serious question if the infidels could sail at will off the western Arabian coast. Under this duress, he was forced to allow the Ottoman sultan, his major competitor for sovereignty in the Islamic world, to take charge of the armed resistance against the Portuguese."[933] Soon, the Ottomans eliminated their Mamluk partners in the defense of Mecca and Medina and established themselves as the sole overlords of the Hijaz.

The challenges to indirect Mamluk rule over Mecca and Medina in al-Ghawrī's time are dealt with here at some length as they are pivotal for understanding why this sultan was so eager to employ symbolic means to reaffirm and corroborate his suzerainty over the Hijaz. These were not idle exercises in the staging of political spectacles to flatter al-Ghawrī, an allegedly vain ruler who loved luxury, as earlier scholarship assumed.[934] Rather, the more frequent use of the title *khādim al-ḥaramayn* in literary texts and inscriptions throughout the realm, the large-scale construction projects in Mecca and along the pilgrimage route, the dispatch of valuable *kiswa*s and *maḥmal*s as symbolic objects of representation, the revivification of the lancer escort of the *maḥmal*, and the sending of proxies of the ruler to the Hijaz all acquire a new level of meaning when seen against the background of al-Ghawrī's continued problems to maintain his position as overlord of the Hijaz and protector of the pilgrimage. In this situation and in competition with the Safawids and Ottomans, whose help he had to rely on to defend Mecca and Medina, al-Ghawrī consciously used every communicative strategy available to demonstrate to his rivals, the members of his court, his subjects, and possibly even to himself that he not only took his role as protector of Islam seriously, but also fulfilled it successfully. Thus, he showed that the Mamluks were still a force to be reckoned with in the struggle for religious legitimacy and political supremacy that ensued in the Islamicate ecumene of the early tenth/sixteenth century.

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933   Brummett, *Seapower* 118 (all quotations). See also Fuess, *Ufer* 59.

934   See, e.g., Petry, *Protectors* 161–2, which speaks about "al-Ghawrī's inclination toward the masquerade of majesty" as well as of "unabashed luxury" and "mockery of pious gratuity" when discussing the pilgrimage of his wife and son.

5.2.3   *The Sultan's Participation in Religious Scholarship*

After praising at length al-Ghawrī's virtues, including his intelligence, clemency, bravery, generosity, his love "for knowledge and the knowledgeable (*muḥabbat al-ʿilm wa-l-ʿulamāʾ*), and [his] inquiry into that which the wise men laid down in all kinds of scholarly disciplines (*ʿulūm*),"[935] al-Sharīf ends his preface of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* with a saying he ascribes to the ancient Iranian king he calls Anūshrawān: "If God wishes a community (*umma*) good, he gives knowledge (*ʿilm*) to its rulers and rule (*mulk*) to its scholars."[936]

Al-Sharīf undoubtedly intended this saying as a comment on the reign of his patron al-Ghawrī. As discussed above,[937] al-Sharīf did his best to present the sultan as a wise ruler, knowledgeable in the religious sciences. Indeed, much of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* can be read as an explication and justification of this claim. Moreover, the two other *majālis* works written for al-Ghawrī also seek to convey the image of the ruler as a well-versed and astute man who was at least the equal, if not, indeed, the intellectual superior of the greatest religious scholars of his realm. While there is no need to repeat our findings in detail here, it bears repeating that the *majālis* texts suggest that al-Ghawrī was very much the ideal ruler envisioned in the aphorism attributed to Anūshrawān, that is, a scholar well-versed in the religious sciences who ruled as sultan.

Although these texts were important, they were not the only way in which this image of the ruler was conveyed. On one level, the sultan's salons as events seem to have served this end as well, as did the production and circulation of the sultan's poetry, or his participation in other scholarly activities of his court.[938] These literary and communicative practices suggest that the idea that the sultan was an active participant in religious scholarship was an important element in al-Ghawrī's vision of himself as a Muslim and as a pious ruler. Consequently, it also became an important element in the religious and political life of his court.

There is also evidence that the sultan sought to publicize his activities in the field of religious poetry. In addition to commissioning the copying of collections of his poetry at court, al-Ghawrī had some of his slave soldiers recite his religious verses in public during high-profile court occasions.[939] Emphasizing the connection between his rank as supreme commander of the army and his

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935   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 3–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
936   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2.
937   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
938   See sections 4.4 above and 6.3.1 below.
939   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 258ʳ, 282ʳ.

activities as a religious poet, these recitations must have played a central role in al-Ghawrī's efforts to disseminate his pious verses among key members of his court society and the Mamluk army.

The *majālis* accounts attest to several even more widely and easily communicable means used to convey the notion of al-Ghawrī as well-versed in religious learning. Central among these are al-Ghawrī's two titles, "sultan of scholars" (*sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ*) and "sultan of the insightful" (*sulṭān al-ʿārifīn* or *ʿāriflerün sulṭānı*), which appear in the *majālis* works and other texts produced in the context of al-Ghawrī's court.[940] As short and expressive formulas, these titles were perfectly suited to highlight al-Ghawrī's engagement with the religious sciences in contexts where more elaborate expositions of the sultan's scholarly merits were not feasible. Moreover, these titles could also be easily circulated and memorized, thus potentially fulfilling promotional and commemorative functions as well. Indeed, al-Ghawrī might well have been remembered as the "sultan of scholars" if the Ottomans had not put an end to the Mamluk Sultanate.

Yet, "sultan of scholars" and "sultan of the insightful" are not the only two titles that al-Ghawrī and those around him employed to publicize the ruler's interest in and affinity for the religious sciences. Unlike the two titles just mentioned, which appear primarily in the context of the *majālis* and courtly texts and hence were most probably known primarily among members of the Egyptian political and cultural elite, these other titles are found, for the most part, in building inscriptions. In addition to the simple epithet of *al-ʿālim* (the knowledgeable one),[941] which had been used by Mamluk rulers already more than 200 years earlier,[942] the title "lord of the sword and the pen" (*ṣāḥib al-sayf wa-l-qalam*) deserves special attention here. Almost all the examples of the use of this honorific for al-Ghawrī known so far come from Syria.[943] The two exceptions are inscriptions on al-Ghawrī's *madrasa* in Cairo and at a road in the Sinai Peninsula, where it is included in a slightly extended form as "lord of the sword,

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940   The title *sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ* and its variants appear, e.g., in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4, 81, 85, 87–8, 91, 104; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 4ʳ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2. The title *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn* and its variants appear, e.g., in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 4, 82–6, 89, 91, 294; (ed. ʿAzzām) 3, 28; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 4ʳ, 8ᵛ; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2. Cf. also Flemming, Nachtgesprächen 27–8.

941   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 12122, 42881.

942   Cf. Aigle, Les inscriptions 60. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 19–20; al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* ii, 811; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 159.

943   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 13631; 31674; 35605; 35931 (all from Aleppo).

the pen, the army, and knowledge,"[944] which also appears several times in the literary offering *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya*.[945]

The title *ṣāḥib al-sayf wa-l-qalam* is not unique to al-Ghawrī and also appears in other inscriptions from the late Mamluk period in Egypt[946] and Syria,[947] as well in epigraphic material from beyond the borders of the sultanate.[948] Nevertheless, it is notable that, according to the data collected in the Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no other ruler used this title as frequently as al-Ghawrī. By presenting himself as "lord of the sword and the pen," al-Ghawrī highlighted to all those who read his inscriptions that he was not only the highest-ranking member of the Mamluk military elite, as symbolized by the sword, but also an accomplished man of learning, as signified by the pen. Together with what we know about the significance of scholarly pursuits for the intellectual and religious life of al-Ghawrī's court, these and similar titles underscore the role of the sultan as a participant in religious scholarship. While many Mamluk rulers were, according to Chase F. Robinson, "hungry for the status that learning could confer,"[949] al-Ghawrī evidently made a particularly pronounced bid for it.

5.2.4 *The Sultan as* mujaddid

Muḥammad's community is a community that has received [divine] mercy. God Most High—may He be praised—has a well-known habit with respect to [the people of this community]. That is, at the end of every one hundred years (*ʿuqb kull miʾa ʿām makhtūma*), He discloses Himself to them [His community] through [His] attributes of overwhelming power (*qahr*) and retaliation (*intiqām*). He then disperses them into factions so that they form parties and some of them let others feel their power through what they have acquired. [He does this] so that they turn to Him in repentance and avoid everything that encompasses sin and wickedness.

When the [year] 900 dawned in this time, those who had strength and power desired to rule. Then, they started to quarrel and conflicts (*fitan*)

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944 Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 12112; ʿAbd al-Mālik, al-Naqsh 114. See also Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 8.

945 E.g., Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193, 241ʳ, 320ᵛ.

946 E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 9285; 0835; 10009; 13452; 13465.

947 E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 11540.

948 E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 11330; 11332; 11581.

949 Robinson, *Historiography* 167.

occurred between them. Things reached alarming proportions, such that everyone thought that the evil (*shirr*) would remain and continue and that it could not become more immense. But then God came to their aid through [His] grace and mercy and protected them and their possessions by means of a sultan who revives (*yufawwiqu*) the age and whose will to do good is sharper than a sword. [God] entrusted to him the rule of Egypt, the noblest of the countries of Islam, and brought him to power by giving him strength (*iʿzāz*), honor (*ikrām*), grandeur (*taʿẓīm*), reverence (*tawqīr*), and respect (*iḥtirām*).[950]

This passage stands at the very beginning of al-Ghawrī's main endowment deed as preserved in *waqfiyya* 882 *qadīm*. Given its context, it is clear that the ruler endowed with "strength, honor, grandeur, reverence, and respect" it refers to is Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī. In addition to this rather convential praise for the ruler, the introductory passage of the endowment deed includes several features not encountered in any other source from al-Ghawrī's period studied so far. First, it clearly and unambiguously presents al-Ghawrī's rule as divinely ordained. In this passage, the sultan acquires the status of a quasi-messianic figure sent by God to rectify the affairs of the Muslims, who suffer from disunity and dissension. Thus, al-Ghawrī's ability to restore security and peace rests not on primarily religious virtues, but on his God-given qualities as a resolute ruler.

However, the text does not simply introduce al-Ghawrī as a God-sent redeemer, without any reference to the broader Islamic religious context. Rather, it builds—and this is the second important point—on a famous prophetic tradition about God's "well-known habit" that comes to bear "at the end of every one hundred years" and includes the sending of a figure appointed by God to remedy the state of His community. This tradition is included in Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī's (d. 275/889) collection of *ḥadīth*s in a chapter on eschatological matters. It is considered authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and reads:[951] "At the end of every one hundred years God sends this community those who renew (*man yujaddidu*) its religion for it."[952]

Based on its central keyword, many authors refer to this *ḥadīth* as that of renewal (*tajdīd*) and to the type of person promised therein as a renewer

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950   Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 2–3. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 54, 137.

951   On its authenticity, see also Landau-Tasseron, Reform 96–7; Corrado, *Tradition* 8–10; al-Ṣaʿīdī, *al-Mujaddidūn* 8–9; Hernandez, *Thought* 106–7.

952   Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Malāḥim*, no. 4291.

(*mujaddid*).[953] The question of its *Sitz im Leben* in early Islam has been tackled by several authors and need not detain us in detail here. Suffice it to say that there is no consensus about its original context and meaning; scholars see it as a testimony of the Islamic community's awareness of its own imperfections,[954] as embedded in early Islamic eschatological debates,[955] as a reflection of Jewish religious concepts,[956] or as a means to raise the status of certain figures of early Islamic history.[957]

For us, the understanding of this tradition in later periods of Islamicate history, which thus far has received far less scholarly attention, is relevant. While a thorough discussion of this topic is not possible here,[958] several noteworthy facts can help us to understand the significance of the passage quoted above: First, some interpreters of the late middle period understood the tradition as pointing primarily to rulers,[959] while others sought to limit the circle of potential *mujaddid*s to scholars.[960] Second, *mujaddid*s were supposed to uphold the prophetic *sunna* and fight innovations,[961] thus fulfilling functions similar to those of *muḥyī*s (revivers) of the *sunna*. This suggests a close connection between the terms *tajdīd* (renewal) and *iḥyāʾ* (revivification),[962] and there are cases in which premodern primary sources use *mujaddid* and *muḥyī* as synonyms when referring to the renewers sent by God every one hundred years.[963] Third, according to most scholars, a *mujaddid* should be active and alive at the beginning of a new century of the Islamic calendar.[964] Fourth, there was no

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953   Voll, Renewal 33. On *jaddada* in this context, see Landau-Tasseron, Reform 107; Corrado, *Tradition* 12.

954   Voll, Renewal, esp. 32–3. See also Landau-Tasseron, Reform 79–80.

955   Friedmann, *Prophecy* 95–7, 101. See also Landau-Tasseron, Reform 80–2; Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 100; Corrado, *Tradition* 13–4; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 172; Hernandez, *Thought* 104–5.

956   Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 99–102.

957   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 84–113, esp. 96, 98–104, 113. See also Corrado, *Tradition* 9–10; Hernandez, *Thought* 107–8.

958   I intend to undertake a thorough study of this topic elsewhere.

959   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 81.

960   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 82–3. See also Landau-Tasseron, Reform 85; Corrado, *Tradition* 16.

961   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 83. See also Voll, Renewal 35–7; Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 99.

962   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 107–8. See also Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 99–100, 103; Friedmann, *Prophecy* 95; Afsaruddin, Renewal 678.

963   Von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 304. See also Griffel, *Theology* 25.

964   Landau-Tasseron, Reform 84–5. See also Friedmann, *Prophecy* 99; Goldziher, Charakteristik 53–4; Corrado, *Tradition* 11; al-Ṣaʿīdī, *al-Mujaddidūn* 9.

consensus whether every century would have only one renewer, or several.[965] Fifth, there was also no formal process of appointing *mujaddid*s, rather, potential candidates gained recognition through their deeds and works.[966] Sixth, in their works, numerous authors suggested that they were the *mujaddid*s of their time, with al-Ghawrī's contemporary al-Suyūṭī being a particularly prominent example.[967] Finally, many of the more generally recognized *mujaddid*s of the late middle period were of Egyptian background, suggesting that the *tajdīd* tradition was particularly significant to Egyptians.[968]

There is evidence beyond the quoted passage from al-Ghawrī's *waqfiyya* that members of his court society applied the *mujaddid* tradition to the sultan, thus endowing him with a superior cosmic status and a degree of religious legitimacy that could be hardly surpassed in the framework of Sunni Islam. At the beginning of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, directly after the first mention of al-Ghawrī's name, God is implored as follows: "Let the days of his sultanate be eternal, strengthen the foundations of his rule and let him be among those who have been promised at the end of every one hundred years, [that is, those] who renew (*yujaddidu*) the religion and the *sunna*."[969] Toward the end of the second volume of the same text, this prayer is repeated almost verbatim, including the reference to the concept of *tajdīd*.[970] Moreover, the latter passage uses the title "*imām* of the tenth century"[971] for al-Ghawrī.[972] Furthermore, there are several inscriptions which refer to him as *muḥyī* (reviver)—a term that could be used as a synonym of *mujaddid*. Such inscriptions appear on the façade of the sultan's funeral complex in Cairo,[973] on smaller objects from the capital,[974] and

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965 Landau-Tasseron, Reform 85. See also Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 104; Friedmann, *Prophecy* 99; Goldziher, Charakteristik 54–6; Corrado, *Tradition* 11–2; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 307–8; al-Saʿīdī, *al-Mujaddidūn* 10.

966 Landau-Tasseron, Reform 85–6, but also see 91–2. Moreover, see Friedmann, *Prophecy* 97; Goldziher, Charakteristik 54; Afsaruddin, Renewal 678.

967 Landau-Tasseron, Reform 86–8. For the case of al-Suyūṭī, see also al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 43ᵛ–46ʳ; Ṭaḥḥān, al-Suyūṭī 330–2; al-Alfī, al-Aṣāla 484–7; Voll, Renewal 38; Lazarus-Yafeh, Reconsideration 104; Goldziher, Charakteristik 58–62; van Donzel, Mudjaddid 290; Newhall, *Patronage* 62; Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 169–70; Afsaruddin, Renewal 678–9; Saleh, Al-Suyūṭī 77–8; Sartain, *Biography* 61, 69–72, 78, 82, 113; al-Saʿīdī, *al-Mujaddidūn* 11–2, 246, 252, 258; Hernandez, *Thought* 101–4, 112–21; and for his competitors, see Winter, *Society* 55–6, 222; Landau-Tasseron, Reform 90, 94.

968 Landau-Tasseron, Reform 94–6. See also Hernandez, *Thought* 125.

969 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 2ᵛ. On this passage, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 110.

970 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 107ᵛ.

971 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 107ᵛ.

972 See also, briefly, Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 148; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 110.

973 Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 12122.

974 Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 13552, 13556.

on a renovation inscription from Mecca;[975] this suggests that referring to al-Ghawrī as *muḥyī* was not limited to the geographical center of the sultanate.[976]

How can we explain that persons drafting an endowment deed, penning the introduction of a literary text, or conceiving a building inscription decided to present al-Ghawrī as a God-sent figure to renew Islam? Arguably, al-Ghawrī ful-filled several—or, depending on one's perspective, all—of the typical require-ments for *mujaddid* status. First, given that the *ʿulamāʾ* were divided over the question whether rulers or scholars could be *mujaddid*s, one could argue that al-Ghawrī was a perfect candidate, since he combined both social roles. His rank as ruler was beyond doubt, and as we have seen, the sultan and his court did their best to present al-Ghawrī as a religious scholar.[977] Second, *mujaddid*s were expected to support the prophetic *sunna*, especially in religious and moral contexts. Again, we have seen how al-Ghawrī did his best to cast himself in the role of a protector of the Prophet's *sunna*, whether by curbing acts seen as immoral, or by encouraging his subjects to perform their religious oblig-ations.[978] Moreover, the sultan and his court also projected an image of al-Ghawrī as a ruler who promoted religious activities on an outstanding scale, be it through the construction of mosques and other religious edifices, or through his support of the *ḥajj*. As in the case of appointing the lancer squad to escort the *maḥmal*, the sultan's efforts were intended to revive religion-related prac-tices that had fallen into disuse.[979] Third, al-Ghawrī clearly fulfilled the con-dition of being alive and active during the first years of a new century of the Islamic calendar, given that he assumed his position as Mamluk ruler in 906 AH.

Fourth, since there was no consensus as to whether God would send one or several *mujaddid*s at the turn of a century, support for the idea that al-Ghawrī was a divinely-appointed renewer did not imply that the claims of other contenders for this position were void. In particular, the claims in favor of al-Ghawrī did not necessarily represent competition with Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's ambitions to be recognized as *mujaddid*. We do not know with cer-tainty whether al-Ghawrī and al-Suyūṭī were aware of each other's aspirations to *mujaddid* status, although there is evidence that the sultan and the polymath

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975 Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 17611.

976 See also the letter edited in Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

977 Cf. the preceding section. None of our sources explicitly associates al-Ghawrī's claim to be a *mujaddid* to his learned activities in his *majālis*. The fact that this claim appears in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, however, suggests a connection between the idea of al-Ghawrī as *mujaddid* and his salons as courtly events.

978 Cf. section 5.2.1 above.

979 Cf. section 5.2.2 above.

were quite well acquainted with each other's religious thinking, given that al-Suyūṭī wrote a comment on al-Ghawrī's religious poetry[980] and that al-Suyūṭī's teachings were discussed in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[981] The ambiguity inherent in the *mujaddid* concept would have made it possible to recognize both of them as *mujaddid*s, for example, by seeing al-Suyūṭī as the renewer among scholars and al-Ghawrī as the one among rulers.

Fifth, since there was no formal process of recognition of a *mujaddid*, people were free to declare that a given individual was a renewer. Sixth, if al-Ghawrī personally supported the proclamations of his *mujaddid* status, as outlined above—a question to which we return shortly—this was not particularly unusual, given that Muslims of the middle period repeatedly voiced the hope that they would be accepted as *mujaddid*s. Finally, the fact that some of his contemporaries presented al-Ghawrī as *mujaddid* matches what we know about the Egyptian background of many renewers of the middle period.

In sum, if one accepts central elements of the image that al-Ghawrī and the members of his court sought to convey of the Mamluk sultan and endorses apparently rather common interpretations of the *tajdīd* tradition, it would be easy to conclude that al-Ghawrī was a *mujaddid*. Indeed, many aspects of the sultan's image as imparted by his courtly events, his patronage activities, and other communicative strategies fit in so well with the qualifications expected from a *mujaddid* that one wonders whether the sultan and those around him had this status and the supreme level of religious legitimacy it entailed in mind when they designed the way the ruler should appear to his subjects. This would imply that his aspirations for *mujaddid* status were not just the pinnacle of the sultan's religious policy, but indeed, its leitmotif.

Earlier cases of Mamluk rulers who were seen—or wanted to be seen—as *mujaddid*s lend further probability to this assumption. The best known example is Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl b. al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 743–6/1342–5), who was the dedicatee of a literary offering by the otherwise little known author Shams al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Qaysarānī (d. 753/1352). In his *al-Nūr al-lāʾiḥ wa-l-durr al-ṣādiḥ fī ṣṭifāʾ mawlānā l-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ* (The shimmering light and the enticing pearl demonstrating that our

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980   Cf. section 3.2.7 above.

981   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6–7, 160–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5–6; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 232–5, 272–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75–8. On the relationship between al-Ghawrī and al-Suyūṭī, see also al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fol. 96ʳ; al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-ʿābidīn* 164–5, 167, 261; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 187; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75; al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* v, 187; Sartain, *Biography* 81, 103–6, 110; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 48, 126; Mauder, Stance 82–3, 94.

lord, the Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, enjoys divine favor),[982] Ibn al-Qaysarānī presents al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl as a divinely appointed ruler uniting the custodianship of the holy cities with exceptional piety and the status of a *mujaddid*.[983] In ascribing this rank to al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl, Ibn al-Qaysarānī demonstrated his interpretative abilities by arguing that God had sent this sultan—whose reign was not even close to the beginning of a century of the Islamic calendar— one hundred years after the inception of Mamluk rule, which was somewhat idiosyncratically understood as beginning with the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (r. 637–47/1240–9), who had appointed former slave soldiers as governors in Egypt and Syria.[984]

When first drawing scholarly attention to Ibn al-Qaysarānī's work, Peter M. Holt wrote: "This salutation of a Mamluk sultan as *mujaddid* is surely unique."[985] The case of al-Ghawrī notwithstanding, there is indeed little evidence that Ibn al-Qaysarānī's efforts to use the *tajdīd* tradition to legitimate Mamluk rule found emulators in the sultanate.[986] Whether members of al-Ghawrī's court knew of Ibn al-Qaysarānī's text is, for the time being, impossible to know. At any rate, there are no direct references to *al-Nūr al-lāʾiḥ*, or to Ibn al-Qaysarānī, for that matter, in any known work from al-Ghawrī's court.

If members of al-Ghawrī's court had a Mamluk model in mind when presenting him as *mujaddid*, it might not have been al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl, but rather al-Ghawrī's revered master Qāytbāy, although it is not entirely clear whether this ruler was ever referred to as a renewer. In her study of Qāytbāy's support for architecture, Amy Newhall suggested that "there is evidence to show that Qāʾit Bay incorporated the ideas about a divinely mandated restorer of religion […] into the already formidable catalogue of Mamluk claims and titles."[987] However, neither Newhall nor the present author could locate any clear-cut evidence that would support the assumption that Qāytbāy was ever presented as *mujaddid*.[988] Moreover, elsewhere Newhall's study states, when referring to al-Suyūṭī's aspirations to *mujaddid* status, that "[i]t was impossible for a Mam-

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982   On this text, see Holt, Offerings 6–8; van Steenbergen, Discourse. Translation of the title partly based on van Steenbergen, Discourse 3.

983   Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *al-Nūr* 47–9, 51. See also Holt, Offerings 6; van Steenbergen, Discourse 9.

984   Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *al-Nūr* 53. See also Holt, Offerings 6–7; van Steenbergen, Discourse 10–2; 14–5, 19–20, 22, 26; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 174–6.

985   Holt, Offerings 6. See also Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 25.

986   However, see also Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *al-Durr al-maṣūn*, esp. 39, 41–2. I thank Yehoshua Frenkel (Haifa) for this reference.

987   Newhall, *Patronage* 32.

988   Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 126, indicates that al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 300, supports Newhall's claim, yet the named passage does not contain any pertinent information.

luk ruler to claim such a position of religious authority."[989] This view is in need of revision, given what we know about al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl and al-Ghawrī, and also seems to contradict the claim raised earlier in Newhall's study regarding Qāytbāy's status as renewer. Although the notion of Qāytbāy as *mujaddid* was later taken up in passing in Carl Petry's *Protectors or Praetorians?*, it likewise did not clearly confirm that al-Ghawrī's former master was ever regarded as a centennial renewer.[990] Finally, the fact that Qāytbāy died in 901 AH after a long period of poor health meant that few of his major activities took place in the new century—thus, it would require a certain level of interpretative effort to cast him in the role of renewer.

Although we have no evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's court knew about earlier attempts to present Mamluk rulers as *mujaddid*s, this does not mean they lacked role models. During the late middle and early modern periods, beyond the borders of the Mamluk Sultanate, the *tajdīd* concept was one of the most widely-employed notions to buttress, affirm, and boost the religious legitimacy of Muslim rulers from the Bosporus to India. From a Mamluk perspective, the case of Uzun Ḥasan (r. 857–82/1453–78), the ruler of the Āq Qoyunlu domains with whom the Mamluks entertained close diplomatic relations, is particularly relevant. From at least 881/1476 onward, scholars of the Āq Qoyunlu court referred to Uzun Ḥasan as the renewer of their time when arguing that the latter was not only an ideal ruler, but also the divinely appointed caliph of God.[991] Earlier, the Ilkhanid Öljeitü (r. 703–16/1304–16)[992] and the Timurid Shāh Rukh (r. 807–50/1405–47)[993] had been regarded as the renewers of their time in roughly the same geographical region—developments that probably influenced the application of the same title to Uzun Ḥasan.

Possibly influenced by Uzun Ḥasan's example, members of other Islamicate court societies in the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries followed suit, by declaring their respective rulers *mujaddid*s. In Central Asia, the Sunni Özbek Shaybānī Khān (r. 906–16/1500–10) was praised as a *mujaddid* by Faḍl Allāh Khunjī (d. 927/1521), then killed by Safawid forces, who, although they generally did not refer to their ruler as a *mujaddid*, saw in

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989   Newhall, *Patronage* 70.

990   Petry, *Protectors* 160.

991   Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 116–8. See also Newhall, *Patronage* 65–6; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 180, 191, 241; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 309; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 362.

992   Brack, Mahdi 613, 618; Brack, Theologies 1153–5.

993   Subtelny and Khalidov, Curriculum 212. See also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 162–3, 175–6; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 35, 309–10, 460; Moin, *Sovereign* 37; Woods, Rise 105; Haarmann, Staat 364; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 361–2; Fleischer, Learning 159; Brack, Mahdi 626–8; Brack, Theologies 1145–6, 1153–4; Binbaş, *Networks* 262–5.

him the fulfillment of multiple eschatological and messianic expectations.[994] Yet, Shaybānī Khān's death did not bring an end to Sunni expectations for the arrival of a *mujaddid* who could counter the rise of the Shiʿi Safawids. The very same Faḍl Allāh Khunjī who had earlier praised Shaybānī Khān as a *mujaddid* later ascribed this title to the Ottoman Sultan Selīm, who stopped the Safawid expansion and ultimately became al-Ghawrī's most important transregional rival.[995]

Faḍl Allāh Khunjī was not without a predecessor in casting Selīm in the role of *mujaddid*. Christopher Markiewicz demonstrated that the Ottoman historian and chancery official Idrīs Bidlīsī (d. 926/1520) played a key role in establishing a close and lasting connection between the Ottoman dynasty and the *tajdīd* concept. The fact that Bidlīsī, who visited Mamluk Egypt during al-Ghawrī's reign, was earlier employed in the Āq Qoyunlu chancery suggests a direct link between Āq Qoyunlu and Ottoman practices of referring to rulers as *mujaddid*s.[996] In Bidlīsī's writings, we also find references to Selīm's father Bāyezīd II as *mujaddid*, indicating that both Ottoman rulers whose tenures overlapped with al-Ghawrī's were seen as renewers.[997] Other authors followed Bidlīsī's example with regard to Sultan Selīm, as references to this ruler as a *mujaddid* in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic works show.[998] Later, the *mujaddid* concept also found ample reception further to the southeast and was applied, for example, to the Mughal rulers Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605) and Awrangzīb (r. 1068–1118/1658–1707).[999]

The references in Mamluk sources to al-Ghawrī as a renewer should be seen against this transregional trend in contemporaneous Islamicate political culture of using the title *mujaddid* for rulers. There are several ways al-Ghawrī's court society and other Islamicate courts could have learned about this and other strategies to endow Muslim leaders with supreme religious and political

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994   Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 174–7. See also Haarmann, K̲h̲undjī 55; Fleischer, Mahdi 43; Fleischer, Lawgiver 161; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 309; Ott, *Transoxanien* 45–6, 52.

995   Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 178. See also von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 309.

996   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 51, 175–6, 179–80, 191, 266–7.

997   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 51, 191, 266–7. Later Ottoman rulers praised as *mujaddid*s include Süleymān I (Weintritt, Concepts 192; Winter, Attitudes 200; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 284; Fleischer, Mahdi 46; Fleischer, Wisdom 243; Fleischer, Lawgiver 165) and Murād III (Fetvacı, *Picturing* 43).

998   Fleischer, Mahdi 45; Fleischer, Lawgiver 163; Corrado, *Tradition* 16; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 311–2; Imber, Ideals 150; Imber, Myth 23; Becker, Studien 405–6 (all referring to Luṭfī Paşa); al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 2, 10, 14. On the latter, see also Tekindağ, Selim-Nâmeler 219; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 137, 189; and more broadly, Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 222–4, 267–8; Çıpa, *Making* 1, 161, 215, 238–40, 247, 250.

999   Von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 314 (Awrangzīb); Moin, *Sovereign* 134 (Akbar).

legitimacy. Like its neighbors, the Mamluk Sultanate entertained close diplomatic contacts with multiple other Islamicate polities of the time, many of which were headed by rulers known as *mujaddid*s, including the Ottoman Sultanate. Moreover, the Mamluk Sultanate was integrated in dense transregional networks of textual circulation, as is clear from our analysis of the role of the Mamluk court as a center of learning. Hence, it stands to reason that Mamluk readers, like other Islamicate court societies, had access to scholarly and literary works arguing for the *mujaddid* status of rulers. Historiographical works might have been especially important here, given the attention such texts paid to questions of courtly representation and political titulature. Furthermore like other courts of the time, al-Ghawrī's court society consisted of people of various cultural, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds, with at least several temporary members—such as al-Sharīf, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār, and Qurqud Bek—originating from regions where references to rulers as *mujaddid*s were part and parcel of regional political culture. As we do not know who penned the introductory passages of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *waqfiyya* 882 *qadīm*, we cannot point to one of these potential channels of communication as the one through which the concept of "ruler as *mujaddid*" traveled to al-Ghawrī's court. Nevertheless, it is clear that there were ample opportunities for the exchange of political and religious concepts in the Islamicate world of the late middle period.[1000]

For al-Ghawrī, the application of the title of *mujaddid* harbored tremendous potential in terms of courtly communication, the legitimation of his position, and the representation of his rule. While we do not know to what degree the sultan was involved in the application of this title to himself, it stands to reason that this notion could not appear in a document as closely connected to the sultan as the endowment deed of his funeral complex without his knowledge and consent. To better grasp the communicative significance of the *tajdīd* concept for al-Ghawrī, it is helpful to differentiate between three possible intended audiences: recipients beyond the Mamluk realm, the sultan's court society, and the population of the sultanate at large.

In terms of transregional courtly communication, the application of the title of *mujaddid* to al-Ghawrī demonstrates that the Mamluk court was not only aware of contemporaneous trends in Islamicate political culture, but was also able to raise far-reaching claims of its own in the struggle for religious and political legitimacy. While the Mamluk sultan could not aspire to the religious

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1000   For great detail on the various ways in which concepts of political and religious authority traveled among Islamicate courts of the time, cf. Markiewicz, *Crisis*, esp. 15–8, 20–1, 51–2, 151–2, 154, 166, 177–91, 287–8.

status claimed, for example, by the Safawid Shāh without fear of severe opposition from Sunni Muslims within and beyond his realm, the title of *mujaddid* offered—together with the title of *khādim al-ḥaramayn*—a particularly good opportunity for al-Ghawrī and those around him to provide the Mamluk sultan with a degree of religious legitimacy on a par with and even superior to that of rival Muslim rulers, although it must be acknowledged that we do not know to what extent this figured in diplomatic and other contacts with other courts.

But the significance of the concept of *tajdīd* was not limited to the domain of transregional communication. As discussed, the notion of renewal was apparently particularly significant for Egyptian Muslims, and the case of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī highlights the attention it received among the country's religious and scholarly elite in the early tenth/sixteenth century. Since all clear-cut references to al-Ghawrī as a *mujaddid* appear in texts closely connected to his court, we may conclude that the sultan's court society was one of its most important intended audiences. This indicates that the assertions that al-Ghawrī was the promised renewer targeted people who were central in confirming, enacting, and enforcing his rule vis-à-vis potential internal opponents. By asserting that al-Ghawrī was a divinely sent figure of cosmic significance heralded by the Prophet Muḥammad, the authors of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and the sultan's endowment deed turned any opposition against the Mamluk ruler into disobedience against God Himself, who had chosen the sultan to rectify the affairs of His community. Notwithstanding the question whether all members of the sultan's court society accepted the attribution of this status to the ruler, one could hardly think of a way to endow the sultan's position with a higher degree of inviolability in the religious cosmos of Sunni Islam.

Another observation supports the assumption that members of the sultan's court were among the primary intended recipients of the claim that al-Ghawrī was the prophetically heralded renewer: Ibn Iyās and other sources not directly connected to the sultan's court do not refer to al-Ghawrī as a *mujaddid*, and there is no evidence that Mamluk subjects beyond the inner circles around the sultan ever viewed him as a renewer. The fact that all known inscriptions from al-Ghawrī's time linked to the theme of renewal use the ambiguous expression *muḥyī* instead of the technical term *mujaddid* reaffirms the impression that the full-fledged application of the *tajdīd* concept to the Mamluk ruler was a feature of elite communication that addressed the Mamluk court as well as possibly other courts, but not the Mamluk population at large. The reasons for this situation are unclear, but it seems possible that al-Ghawrī and those around him saw better chances for a positive reception of the notion of the sultan as *mujaddid* within his court society than among the sultanate's broader population. While this suggests that the claims for al-Ghawrī's *mujaddid* status were geared

toward specific audiences, their significance for their intended recipients in and beyond the frontiers of the Mamluk Sultanate was probably considerable, as their appearance in mutually independent sources suggests.

5.3   The Significance of Religious Communication at al-Ghawrī's Court

Religious communication—understood here as communication substantially shaped by an element perceived as transcending the human dimension—was very widespread and common in the context of al-Ghawrī's court, regardless of whether the latter is defined as a social group or as a series of occasions. Consequently, religious communication at court included a great array of people, dealt with multiple topics, had manifold forms, happened in diverse spaces, and took place on a variety of occasions. Having studied several courtly acts of religious communication in detail in the preceding chapters, we are now in a position to summarize our main findings and draw conclusions about the significance of religious communication at court and its relation to other aspects of court life.

As for those involved in courtly acts of religious communication, our sources present the sultan as the center of almost all of them. This probably reflects, at least in part, the specific intentions behind their composition, given that many of these texts were written to secure the ruler's patronage. Still, in light of what we know about the structure of the Mamluk court, it seems plausible that the sultan initiated, shaped, and possibly controlled much of the religious communication of the court, although there can be no doubt that our sources highlight the sultan's role and provide less information on the parts other parties played in these acts, let alone on those courtly acts that did not involve the sultan directly.

Nevertheless, the sources indicate that numerous other people were directly involved in acts of religious communication at the court, too. A few of them can be identified by name, such as the Ottoman prince Qurqud, leading scholars, and administrative officials, or the top officers of the Mamluk military, who, among other activities, attended the Friday prayer and the celebration of major religious holidays together with the sultan. This regular participation of high-ranking military leaders in acts of religious communication is noteworthy, as members of this group were apparently almost completely absent from the scholarly activities at the court analyzed in the preceding chapter. This suggests that religious events allowed for a fuller integration and participation of various members of the sultan's court society than did those of a primarily scholarly nature. Sufis were another group that can be partially identified by

name who did not play an important role in scholarly activities, but interacted closely with the sultan on religious occasions, such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, when al-Ghawrī joined their religious practices. Nonetheless, their presence seems to have been limited to a few special events, suggesting that Sufis were not among the regular members of the inner circles of the sultan's court society. Again, however, we must be aware of the limitations of our sources, which might not have included information on some of the more intimate religious practices of the courtly elite in which Sufis might have played a more pronounced role.

Other participants are not referred to by name in our sources, but rather appear as members—and in some cases representatives—of specific social groups, such as the sultan's bodyguards, the army at large, provincial administrators, or Quran readers. Nevertheless, these people evidently participated in religious events at the court and thus at least qualify as temporary members of the sultan's court society. Indeed, our findings suggest that special religious occasions, such as the sultan's celebration of the Prophet's *mawlid*, constituted events in which almost all members of the sultan's court society participated. Hence, whether or not persons were allowed, able, and willing to participate in such events was decisive to their status as members of the sultan's court.

Yet, members of the court were not the only communication partners in religious events. On occasions such as the large-scale dispersion of alms or processions through the streets of Cairo, the population of the capital at large temporarily participated in the court's religious events as well, with various levels of involvement. This suggests that religious events were an important way for the sultan and his court society to interact and communicate with the population of the realm in general. At times, such acts of communication between different social groups could go wrong, as we saw in the case of the sultan's distribution of alms on ʿĀshūrāʾ. Arguably, differing practices of communication and inconsistent expectations about the course of such events were major threats to their success.

Other Muslim rulers and their court societies were another at least intended audience of religious events at the sultan's court. Although not physically present, these court societies, through proxies such as envoys or other visiting dignitaries who attended for instance religious occasions connected to the pilgrimage rites, could partake in events staged by al-Ghawrī. The sultan and those around him took special care to integrate representatives of other courts into their courtly events and, it seems, even staged certain celebrations primarily for them. In such instances, the communicative significance of the events becomes particularly palpable in our sources and we see how the Mamluk ruling elite used courtly occasions to project a positive image throughout

the Islamicate ecumene. This image included, for example, the notion of the Mamluks as rightful overlords of the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina. As is to be expected, representatives of non-Islamicate polities, such as envoys from European courts, do not appear in our sources as far as such specifically Muslim courtly events are concerned. This matches the observation that local non-Muslims likewise did not play a significant role in al-Ghawrī's court society. Shiʿi Muslims, apart from Safawid envoys whose presence served diplomatic purposes, were another group notably absent from religious events at the court. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that the religious life at al-Ghawrī's court was more open to religious currents related to Shiʿism than we might expect in light of widespread notions about Mamluk rulers as staunch Sunnis.

Finally, we must acknowledge that for many participants in the religious events discussed here, God was the most important intended communication partner. Yet, at the same time, this observation marks the limits of historical analysis.

Turning now to what was communicated by these acts and events, undoubtedly, many of the implied meanings are lost to us today. Nevertheless, three particularly apparent clusters of meaning deserve special attention. First, key topics of religious thought and scholarship, such as Islamic eschatology or central concepts of *kalām*, including God's attributes or the definition of *īmān*, were significant to the members of al-Ghawrī's court and hence were a focus of their religious discussions. When engaging in these discussions, the members of the sultan's court society displayed not only their intellectual acumen, but also their familiarity with, and understanding of current religious debates of their time. In their efforts to meaningfully contribute to these processes of negotiating their shared Sunni identity in scholarly terms, they relied on both widely available and specialized works of Muslim religious thought, including key texts of the *kalām* tradition; thus, their innovative engagement with Islamic learning was based on solid foundations.

Individual religious debates could be characterized by a high "tolerance of ambiguity"[1001] to use a term coined by Thomas Bauer—at least with regard to topics that were not directly relevant for the religious unity and stability of the sultanate. In other cases, when members of the ruling elite perceived the religious peace in the realm to be threatened, there was a pronounced will for reconciliation and harmonization that found expression in the development of sophisticated theological compromise solutions. Often, the sultan is credited with devising these compromises. This can be understood as both an attempt

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1001   Bauer, *Kultur*.

to highlight the ruler's wisdom and to endow the envisioned solutions with additional authority. Moreover, it highlights the status of courts as "privileged place[s] for religious [...] mediation"[1002] that has recently attracted growing interest in transcultural court studies.[1003]

Second, religious communication at the sultan's court constituted a collective affirmation of the shared Muslim religious identity and worldview of those involved, both in very general terms and with regard to the particular forms of Sunni Islam dominant in Egypt during the late middle period. On a general level, the sultan's court society affirmed fundamental aspects of Islam in the late middle period, such as the validity of Islamic law, the mandatory character of the ritual prayer, the belief in the afterlife, and the acceptability of Sufism. Other elements of religious life that were potentially more contested among Sunnis of the time, but were also confirmed and endorsed by al-Ghawrī's court included popular notions of *baraka*, practices of *ziyāra*, the expression of special respect and affection for ʿAlids, and the significance of specific local shrines in Cairo and its surroundings. By embracing and supporting these and other elements of Sunni Islam, the sultan's court society reaffirmed its own religious identity and signaled to other Muslims what constituted appropriate religious thought and practice.

Third, the religious communication at court entailed statements about the status and qualities of the Mamluk ruling elite, and especially the sultan. As seen, many acts of religious communication at court, including the sultan's religious poetry, served to display the ruler's piety and other religiously significant virtues, such as generosity, wisdom, or his respect for *sharīʿa* rulings. Moreover, processes of courtly religious communication served to affirm that the sultan took seriously his roles as protector and supporter of Islam, for example, by fighting immoral behavior, living up to the Quranic commandment of *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf* by encouraging his fellow Muslims to perform their prayers, and by investing capital into construction projects that benefited Islam. Moreover, in the analyzed acts of religious communication, the sultan appears to be so closely linked to Sufis and scholars that he performatively transformed his status, at least temporarily, into that of a sultan-*cum*-Sufi-*cum*-scholar. This re-envisioning of the sultan as a religiously significant figure of the highest order reached its pinnacle in the claim that he was the God-sent renewer (*mujaddid*) of his time. By attributing this status to the sultan, the members of his court society brought al-Ghawrī's religious self-representation to a new level that

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1002   Echevarria, Trujamanes 73.
1003   See esp. von der Höh, Jaspert, and Oesterle (eds.), *Brokers*.

could serve, concomitantly, to counter similar claims brought forth on behalf of other Islamicate rulers and offered an overarching interpretative framework for the sultan's religious activities.

Multifaceted messages such as those just outlined called for sophisticated methods of communication, and indeed, we see that the religious communication at al-Ghawrī's court encompassed a dense and complex network of discursive and symbolic, verbal and non-verbal acts of communication. Often, various types of communication were interrelated in one and the same religious activity, such as, for example, the celebration of religious holidays when verbal acts of communication—such as prayers, sermons, or theological discussions—took place next to non-verbal acts of communication, which could include physical movements in prayer, parades, prostrations, or Sufi dances. Verbal communication could take on highly sophisticated forms in the context of the religious life of the court, as the examples of religious poetry, theological discussions, and written treatises produced for the sultan's *majālis* show. Often, intertwined forms of verbal and non-verbal communication were part of consciously staged ceremonies and rituals, such as, for example, religious processions, judiciary sessions that dealt with religious issues, or homage ceremonies on religious occasions.

The issue of materiality of religion deserves special attention in this context, given that inanimate objects often played a particularly important role in both symbolic and discursive acts of religious communication at court. In the latter case, books and other objects of writing figured prominently in religious debates as repositories of knowledge. At the same time, books—and especially Quran codices—could be potent religious communicative symbols, too. They shared this status with numerous other objects, including robes of honor, tents, *kiswa*s, *maḥmal* palanquins, as well as edifices and their parts, such as the *maqṣūra*, a structure that marked the sultan's special prayer space. Although a comprehensive analysis of the peculiarities and significance of religious objects in late Mamluk court life is beyond the limits of the present study, our findings suggest that a detailed discussion of the role religious objects played in courtly contexts of the Islamicate late middle period would be most worthwhile.

The spatial context of religious communication under al-Ghawrī likewise merits close scrutiny, as the example of the *maqṣūra* as a material and spatial signal of court status showed with particular clarity. Courtly events of religious significance in al-Ghawrī's time often, but not always took place in the spatial heart of the sultanate, that is, the Cairo Citadel. Here, the main Citadel Mosque was primarily used for oft-recurring religious events, such as the Friday prayer. Other spaces that were more closely connected to the person of the sultan and

the political culture of the sultanate, such as the *ḥawsh* of the citadel, likewise housed religious events, including the *mawlid* of the Prophet. There is evidence that the politically charged space of the citadel gained an additional layer of meaning when religious events that premodern Muslims viewed as pregnant with the transferable religious quality of *baraka* were staged there.

Yet, the citadel was far from the only space in which courtly religious events took place. Rather, the sultan and those around him incorporated other significant localities in Cairo and its surroundings into their religious practices as well, thus in part reaffirming, in part shaping the religious landscape of the metropolitan area. The shrines of al-Shāfiʿī and al-Layth b. Saʿd constituted prime examples of localities that were already of considerable religious importance prior to al-Ghawrī's reign and that the sultan and his court favored as spaces in which they could engage in religious communication. By contrast, the space of the sultan's funeral complex acquired its special meaning only during al-Ghawrī's reign, inter alia, through the courtly religious events that the ruler orchestrated there.

Religiously charged spaces outside Cairo were of considerable importance for religious communication under al-Ghawrī, too. Mecca in particular, where the sultan invested heavily in the city's religious and non-religious infrastructure, ranked among the most prominent localities in the shared mental map of the sultan's court society. Although the ruler never visited the city while in office, he used various proxies, including inanimate objects such as the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal*, and people, such as his wife and his son, to represent his close connection with—and suzerainty over—what was, for Muslims, religiously the most significant place on Earth. Moreover, by developing and maintaining the main pilgrimage route, the sultan reinforced the link between Cairo and the sanctuaries of the Hijaz, both physically and symbolically.

With regard to the times at which religious communication took place, we can differentiate between three types of occasions: regular ones that recurred frequently, less frequent cyclical ones, and one-time occurrences. The most prominent of the first category was the weekly communal Friday prayer, which played a central role in the religious life of the court, as a demonstration of piety that also marked and structured the passing of time. Moreover, it reaffirmed the sultan's continued status as supreme ruler, confirmed his physical ability to rule, and provided spatial reenactments of the social structure of the court. Cyclical, but less frequent occasions for religious communication, which were often observed with particular diligence and care, included, for example, the Prophet's birthday or the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ. In addition, several occasions related to the pilgrimage rites, such as the ceremonies marking the departure of the pilgrimage caravan from Cairo, belong here. Special, one-time events for reli-

gious communication included visits of high-ranking foreign dignitaries, or the departure of the Mamluk host to Syria, which included representatives of the most respected Sufi communities of Egypt.

Why was religious communication evidently such an important aspect of court life under al-Ghawrī? First, it is highly probable, but difficult to verify, that the religion of Islam, salvation, the hereafter, and the divine protection of the realm were of genuine interest to the members of the sultan's court society.[1004] In addition, a key function of religious communication at the late Mamluk court involved making statements about the court and especially its head, Qāni-ṣawh al-Ghawrī. During religious events, this took place also and especially in front of audiences that had little access to other communicative activities of the inner circles of the sultan's court society, such as, for example, the sultan's *majālis*. This observation echoes findings of studies on European courts, where religious celebrations were often among "the most visible forms of public self-representation of the court."[1005] Much of the court's religious communication incorporated implicit or explicit statements about the piety and virtue of the sultan's court society, including its head al-Ghawrī, while other acts of communication focused directly on the status of the ruler as custodian of the holy cities and renewer of his time. Moreover, religious events were opportunities for his court society and the population at large to pay homage to the sultan. Hence, religious events provided the ruling elite, with the sultan at its head, with special opportunities to corroborate their position, reaffirm their control over other members of the elite as well as the general populace, and integrate relevant parties into the performance of rule.

In their practices of religious communication, the Mamluk elite under al-Ghawrī brought forth novel claims, formulated innovative concepts, and employed new strategies that had parallels in the Islamicate court culture of the late middle period at large—at least to an extent—, yet were highly innovative in the context of the Mamluk court. Such novel elements, which were in combination unprecedented, included sophisticated courtly religious debates in which the sultan participated, particularly lavish religious celebrations, elite-supported attempts to reconcile the views of rival Sunni schools of theology, the promotion of newly immigrated Sufi orders, the formulation and endorsement of a distinctively pro-ʿAlid form of Sunnism, the large-scale and multilingual production of religious poetry in the ruler's name, and the, in terms of their persistency and openness, novel claims that the sultan was a Sufi, scholar,

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1004   For an attempt at assessing al-Ghawrī's personal religiosity, see Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 183–7.
1005   Paravicini, Alltag 14.

and *mujaddid*. These findings suggest that Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī and his closest intimates were highly innovative, not merely with regard to issues of fiscal and military policy—as Carl Petry masterfully illuminated[1006]—but also in matters of religious communication and the re-interpretation of Islamic teachings, practices, and beliefs. The sultan and those around him not only used new economic investment strategies and up-to-date military technologies to stabilize and defend their position; they also employed novel religious practices, new theological concepts, and innovative claims to religious status to buttress and maintain their position—a finding that calls into question earlier notions of Mamluk Egypt as a "bulwark of orthodox cultural and religious conservationism."[1007] Moreover, the picture of religious life at the sultan's court that emerges from our analysis is inseparably connected to concepts of rulership and the representation of legitimate rule at al-Ghawrī's court. It is to this thematic complex that we turn in the second volume of this book.

1006   See section 2.2.1 above.
1007   Haarmann, Miṣr 165.

Rulership, Representation, and Legitimation of Rule at al-Ghawrī's Court

As the social center of the Mamluk polity, the communicative activities of al-Ghawrī's court were not limited to scholarly and religious topics, but also focused on political themes. Among these political themes, concepts of rulership and political theory as well as practices of representation and legitimation of rule deserve special attention, first, because they are treated in particular detail in our sources and therefore must have been of special significance to members of al-Ghawrī's court. Second, an analysis of pertinent acts of communication allows for unique insights into three understudied subjects, namely Mamluk political thought, Mamluk performative political culture, and the ways in which members of al-Ghawrī's court created and affirmed a shared vision of Mamluk society and social reality. Third, rethinking, refining, and remodeling Islamicate political concepts on the one hand and developing and implementing various means to represent and legitimate rule on the other hand were central strategies in the late Mamluk political elite's efforts to react to the challenges they faced in a rapidly changing political, cultural, social, religious, and economic environment. In this process, members of the elite arrived at novel answers to longstanding questions in Islamicate political culture, and some of their responses may have influenced the ways in which Muslims envisioned and enacted political rule for centuries.

Like the terms "court" and "representation" discussed above,[1] concepts such as "rule," "rulership," and "legitimation" only reveal their full analytical potential when properly theorized. Max Weber's work offers a valuable starting point for reflection about these notions.[2] Weber defined rule (*Herrschaft*)[3] as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons."[4] Rule must be differentiated from power (*Macht*), which

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1 See sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 above.
2 For a recent introduction to Weber's pertinent work and its reception, see Anter, *Macht.*
3 Against the otherwise cited English translation of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* edited by Roth and Wittich, I translate *Herrschaft* as "rule" and not as "domination," as the latter term is too narrow to convey all the connotations of Weber's understanding of *Herrschaft.*
4 Weber, *Economy* i, 53. For Weber's definition of obedience, see Weber, *Economy* i, 215. For

Weber understood as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."[5] Hence, for Weber, "rule" is a more "precise" term than the "sociologically amorphous"[6] concept of "power" and does not include every way in which power is exerted.[7] Though not explicitly discussed by Weber, we can conceptualize the term "rulership" in this theoretical framework as the status of a person exercising rule and the associated combination of characteristics.[8]

One important aspect of rulership is the ongoing interaction between rulers and groups of people surrounding them and assisting them in implementing their commands, since rule usually requires, according to Weber,

> a staff [...], that is, a *special* group which can normally be trusted to execute the general policy as well as the specific commands. The members of the [...] staff may be bound to obedience to their superior (or superiors) by custom, by effectual ties, by a purely material complex of interests, or by ideal (*wertrationale*) motives.[9]

The concept of "legitimacy," that is, "the prestige of [a given order] being considered binding"[10] is central to Weber's reflections on political rule. Building on Weber and focusing in particular on late middle and early modern Islamicate polities, Hakan Karateke further nuanced the notion of legitimacy as the "subjects' *belief* in the rightfulness of the ruler or the state, more specifically in their authority to issue commands."[11]

To Weber, rulers invariably seek to ensure that the existing system of rule is seen to be endowed with legitimacy,[12] although no ruler can ever hope to achieve absolute legitimacy in the eyes of all relevant social groups.[13] The type of legitimacy that predominates in a given system of rule fundamentally shapes

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helpful reflections on "rule" in court studies, see Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 35–8; Hirschbiegel, Hof und Macht; Conermann, Hof, esp. 13; and in Mamluk studies Franz, Castle 349–50.

5   Weber, *Economy* i, 53.

6   Weber, *Economy* i, 53 (both quotations).

7   Weber, *Economy* i, 212.

8   On the connection between rule and ruler, see Weber, *Economy* iii, 946.

9   Weber, *Economy* i, 212–3. See also Weber, *Economy* i, 264–6.

10   Weber, *Economy* i, 31.

11   Karateke, Legitimizing 15.

12   Weber, *Economy* i, 213. See also Karateke, Legitimizing 16.

13   Karateke, Legitimizing 16. See also von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 49, 461.

the ways in which commands are obeyed, the staff is organized, and authority is practiced.[14] Weber developed three ideal types of political rule differentiated on the basis of their grounds for legitimacy:

1. Rational grounds—resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).
2. Traditional grounds—resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority); or finally,
3. Charismatic grounds—resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established *impersonal order*. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office. In the case of traditional authority, obedience is owed to the *person* of the [lord][15] who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is (within its sphere) bound by tradition. But here the obligation of obedience is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified *leader* as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma.[16]

Weber was well aware of the peculiar political system of the Mamluk Sultanate,[17] which he understood as belonging to the subtype of traditional authority called patrimonialism,[18] that is, a form of traditional authority which "develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master."[19]

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14   Weber, *Economy* i, 213.
15   Here the translation renders the German *Herr* incorrectly as "chief."
16   Weber, *Economy* i, 215–6. For a critical review of this model from the perspective of Islamicate history, see von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 44–5; and for an example of its application, see Subtelny, *Timurids* 2, 11–2, 15, 33–6, 39, 41, 199–200, 229–30, 233.
17   See, e.g., Weber, *Economy* i, 234, 261–2; iii, 1016, 1072, 1076.
18   Weber, *Economy* i, 234.
19   Weber, *Economy* i, 231.

Weber's general categorization of Mamluk rule as belonging to a subtype of traditional authority appears to be correct and in the context of the present study, leads us to ask about the traditions that al-Ghawrī's rule primarily rested on and further, about how the sultan and those around him claimed, legitimized, and enacted their traditional authority. Yet, Weber also emphasized that "none of these three ideal types [described above] [...] is usually to be found in historical cases in 'pure' form."[20] This holds true, especially since "the basis of every authority [...] is a *belief*, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige. The composition of this belief is seldom altogether simple."[21] Hence, it is worthwhile to elucidate not only how al-Ghawrī's rule constituted an example of traditional authority, but also to ask about the role that elements of legal and charismatic authority played.

The usefulness of Weber's reflections on legitimate political rule does not end here, especially when we take into account later refinements and developments of his thought, such as Rodney Barker's important book *Legitimating Identities: The Self-representation of Rulers and Subjects* (2001). Barker builds on Weber's theory of legitimate rule to answer a seemingly rather simple question: "What are governments doing when they spend time, resources and energy legitimating themselves?"[22] Barker focuses in particular on what he calls the "self-legitimation" or the "endogenous legitimation" of rulers, which he describes as follows:

> The claim of rulers to special status or qualities, and the actions they take in cultivating this claim, are the central part of endogenous legitimation, of the self-justification of rulers by the cultivation of an identity distinguished from that of ordinary men and women.[23]

According to Barker, self-legitimation "comprises all those actions which rulers [...] take to insist on or demonstrate [...] that they are justified in the actions that they follow."[24] Here, Barker builds on an element in Weber's thought that sees "legitimation as a self-referential and self-justifying activity characteristic of rulers [...], one whose practical character and manner of expression varied with the formal and substantive character of the regime."[25] For Barker, as

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20   Weber, *Economy* i, 216. See also Weber, *Economy* i, 262.
21   Weber, *Economy* i, 263.
22   Barker, *Legitimating* 2.
23   Barker, *Legitimating* 3.
24   Barker, *Legitimating* 30.
25   Barker, *Legitimating* 13.

for Weber, raising claims for legitimate authority is one of the most central activities of any form of government.[26] Therefore, legitimation and rulership appear as inseparably linked, or, as Barker puts it, legitimation is "a characteristic of the phenomenon of being a ruler."[27] This is not to say that every ruler is considered legitimate by everyone, given that one must differentiate between "legitimacy as an ascribed attribute, and legitimation, the action of ascribing."[28] Barker argues that "when rulers legitimate themselves, they give an account of who they are, in writing, in images, in more or less ceremonial actions and practices."[29] Hence, practices of legitimation deserve thorough attention from historians, especially since rulers invest considerable resources in such activities.[30]

Barker's work shows that the common subjects are often not the main intended audience of rulers' activities of self-legitimation, as "[r]ulers legitimate their position and power to themselves and to their immediate staff, who are their immediate mirrors, at least as much as they do to the mass of those whom they govern and whose support in votes, taxes, and time and effort they cultivate."[31] On the one hand, rulers are always at the center of self-legitimation activities which primarily seek to demonstrate that the actions and commands of individual people and not of abstract political systems or regimes are justified.[32] On the other hand, legitimation is also of key importance for rulers as people, given that it helps them make sense of their own exalted position:[33] "Legitimation assists [not only] people to obey, it is even more important in assisting people to rule, in justifying their rule and making it coherent for *them*."[34] This explains why many legitimation activities take place in a way that only allows rulers to experience them in their entirety and full complexity.[35] Thus, as "a private theatre for rulers"[36] communicative activities of legitimation are shaped, first and foremost, by the tastes, preferences, and needs of rulers.[37]

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26   Barker, *Legitimating* 13–4.
27   Barker, *Legitimating* 20.
28   Barker, *Legitimating* 22.
29   Barker, *Legitimating* 35.
30   Barker, *Legitimating* 36.
31   Barker, *Legitimating* 31.
32   Barker, *Legitimating* 31–2.
33   Barker, *Legitimating* 37.
34   Barker, *Legitimating* 37. See also Barker, *Legitimating* 50.
35   Barker, *Legitimating* 41, 44.
36   Barker, *Legitimating* 41.
37   Barker, *Legitimating* 51–2.

Legitimation "is in the first place for the benefit of rulers, not of subjects, and is pursued in the sight of rulers, not in the sight of the ruled."[38]

Barker acknowledges that apart from rulers, other audiences also play important roles in practices of legitimation. He refers to at least four other intended recipients of legitimating activities: the direct social environment of rulers, their subjects, other rulers and ruling elites, and posterity.[39] Barker sees attention to posterity as derived from the need of rulers to legitimate their position to themselves, as "a concern for posterity is a concern for one's own survival, an attempt to reassure oneself that mortality can be transcended."[40]

The elites surrounding rulers that can often be identified with their courts are of special importance to Barker's theory of legitimation: "In regimes with 'princes' of one kind or another, the loyalty of courtiers is essential, and systematically cultivated, in a way that that of ordinary subjects may not be."[41] In such cases, legitimation activities, including those performed beyond the view of most subjects, serve to confirm the identity of elite groups and their high status.[42] Moreover, gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the ruling elite is key for rulers, given that the elite consists of the most important groups through which rulers exercise their rule, but among whom the most dangerous forms of opposition may also arise.[43] Barker summarizes this network of interlocking needs for legitimation as follows:

> Rulers are legitimating themselves in their own eyes; at the same time, they are legitimating themselves in the sight of their immediate supporters—administrators, advisers, military leaders; the governing community is legitimating itself collectively in its own eyes; and the governing community is legitimating itself in the eyes of ordinary subjects.[44]

Barker argues that the role of "ordinary subjects" as audiences of the legitimation of rulers should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, as a "consistent aspect of the conduct of rulers,"[45] legitimating acts of communication targeting broader parts of the population matter since they integrate the subjects of

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38   Barker, *Legitimating* 51.
39   Barker, *Legitimating* 52, 70–1.
40   Barker, *Legitimating* 52.
41   Barker, *Legitimating* 60. See also Barker, *Legitimating* 57–8, 75.
42   Barker, *Legitimating* 55–7, 75–6.
43   Barker, *Legitimating* 58–9.
44   Barker, *Legitimating* 59.
45   Barker, *Legitimating* 107.

rulers into the existing social order and justify obedience to their rulers' commands, even when not directly forced to do so.[46] Such activities of legitimation thus endow the subjects' obedience with meaning, making it possible for them to follow their rulers' commands as if these decrees were their own wishes.[47] As Barker notes, "legitimation is necessary to subjects not to cause them to obey, but to enable them to obey."[48]

However, for Barker, foreign rulers and ruling elites constitute more important audiences for rulers' legitimation than their subjects. For rulers, "[f]oreign relations are peer relations and have as one of their essential components the exchange of esteem, and the confirmation and cultivation of identity."[49] As the only equals in status with whom rulers can interact, foreign rulers play a central role in corroborating their position, thus turning every act of communication between rulers into one of mutual recognition.[50]

When combined with a communication-centered approach to court culture and Max Weber's concepts of rule and legitimate authority, Barker's work on the legitimation of rule has several important implications for the study of the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court. First, it allows for a proper conceptualization of legitimation as differentiated from the related notion of legitimacy. Second, Barker's work provides a clear explanation of the ways in which legitimation, as a practice of claiming legitimacy, is always performative. Hence, it makes little sense to inquire about the legitimacy of a given ruler or regime as an abstract quality. Rather, our analysis must focus on the ways in which legitimacy is claimed communicatively and enacted symbolically through social processes.

Third, Barker's insistence on the importance of rulers and ruling elites as audiences of legitimating practices suggests that communicative acts that did not take place in front of large audiences—be it in or beyond a ruler's court society—could be highly relevant for a ruler's legitimation. Hence, Barker's work helps us to make sense of legitimating practices at al-Ghawrī's court that took place in more limited social groups around the ruler and underscores their significance for late Mamluk political culture.

Based on these insights, the present chapter explores why al-Ghawrī and the members of the late Mamluk elite invested large amounts of economic, social, and cultural capital in activities of legitimation. Moreover, it argues that

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46   Barker, *Legitimating* 108.
47   See also Weber, *Economy* iii, 946.
48   Barker, *Legitimating* 51.
49   Barker, *Legitimating* 83.
50   Barker, *Legitimating* 83–5, 87.

Mamluk rule experienced a crisis of legitimacy during the early tenth/sixteenth century, and that this necessitated the development and application of in part highly innovative strategies of representation and legitimation of rule.[51] The first section of the chapter (6.1) examines the implication and causes of this crisis, including the rise of the neighboring Safawid and Ottoman polities with their distinctive claims for universal rule, but also domestic developments in the Mamluk realm. The two subsequent sections (6.2 and 6.3) explore the manifold and often innovative strategies that al-Ghawrī and members of his court developed and employed in reaction to the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy. Analyzing rulership and political theory at al-Ghawrī's court and in his *majālis*, section 6.2 demonstrates how members of al-Ghawrī's court established communicative and symbolic relations between their sultan and exemplary rulers of the past, thus turning the former slave soldier al-Ghawrī into a key link in centuries-old traditions of universal rule. Moreover, it scrutinizes the in part decidedly novel interpretative and communicative strategies used by members al-Ghawrī's court to establish that the sultan fulfilled four central expectations of legitimate rule; namely, that he be of noble pedigree, be divinely preordained, be just, and embody military prowess. Thereafter, the remainder of section 6.2 explores how and why members of the court innovatively reinterpreted the political and legal status of the caliphate in a way that allowed them to envision al-Ghawrī not only as the *de facto* and *de jure* holder of all caliphal prerogatives, but indeed as the rightful caliph of the Muslim community. Section 6.3 switches the focus to primarily performative strategies of courtly representation and legitimation of rule. It argues that al-Ghawrī and those around him consciously held salons; sponsored architectural projects, including the sultan's (for the Mamluks) unprecedented construction of a Persianate park-*cum*-hippodrome; issued a new type of copper coinage bearing visual representations of key sultanic projects; staged parades and festivities; and sponsored literary productions and the book arts to communicate, dramatize, justify, and reaffirm the legitimacy of late Mamluk rulership in general and al-Ghawrī's status in particular. Rather than squandering resources, they thereby took up strategies and used forms of communication that were understandable and meaningful to domestic audiences, but also to interlocutors throughout the broader Islamicate ecumene. Section 6.4 puts our main findings into dialogue with the state of research and localizes the political communication at al-Ghawrī's court between tradition and innovation. It argues that, in contrast to what is often assumed, the Mamluk political culture of al-Ghawrī's time was not

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51   For this argument, see also Mauder, Legitimating.

inherently irrational nor was it isolated and conservative, rather it was closely interconnected with other parts of the Islamicate world, and was, at least at times, highly innovative, and often rational.

6.1 The Crisis of Late Mamluk Legitimacy

As Wael Hallaq noted, "gaining and holding on to legitimacy was the prime challenge that every ruler and dynasty had to face"[52] in post-formative Islamicate societies.[53] This also applied, especially, to many Mamluk rulers who began their careers with several severe disadvantages in the highly competitive contest for legitimacy characteristic of Islamicate political life in the late middle period. At a time when it was generally accepted that rulers of Islamicate polities should be Muslims by birth and belong to families with histories of dynastic rule,[54] the odds were against Mamluk rulers who were former non-Muslim slaves. Lacking dynastic pedigree and Muslim origins, they ruled as foreigners over a society in which freedmen ranked, theoretically at least, very low on the social ladder.[55]

It has been argued that in the Mamluk system, servile origins were a mark of distinction and an object of pride, given that the highest ruling echelons of the sultanate were mostly former *mamlūk*s.[56] Yet, as Koby Yosef showed, there is no evidence in the available sources that former *mamlūk*s were proud of their origins. Rather, men who had been military slaves later often sought ways to gloss over their servile past.[57] For Arabic speakers of the middle period, the term *mamlūk* had connotations of humbleness, subordination, servitude, or the rendering of obedience; it did not convey a notion of elite status.[58] Moreover, in diplomatic relations, Mongols, Āq Qoyunlu Turkmens, Armenians, and Ottomans repeatedly mocked the Mamluk military elite for their slave origins and

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52 Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 198.

53 See also Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 73; Humphreys, Legitimacy 5, 12.

54 Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 55.

55 On the challenges the Mamluks' slave origin posed to their legitimation efforts, see, e.g., Franz, Castle 353–4; Herzog, Legitimität 251; Luz, Icons 241; Aigle, Legitimizing 222–3; Holt, Position 245; Northrup, Sultanate 255; Broadbridge, Legitimacy 93–4, 117; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 12, 16; Geoffroy, al-Suyūṭī 914; Hassan, *Longing* 67; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 4. On their lack of noble ancestry, see, e.g., Troadec, Baybars 113–4; Nagel, *Staat* ii, 89; Binbaş, Structure and Function 504; Aigle, Les inscriptions 77.

56 See Yosef, Term 8–9, for examples of this view in earlier scholarship.

57 Yosef, Term 9, 27–8.

58 Yosef, Term 9–13, 27.

lack of noble descent as a way of denying the legitimacy of Mamluk rule.[59] Aware of the problems associated with their humble origins, several Mamluk rulers and other members of the elite tried to legitimate their acquired status by establishing marital or blood relations with recognized dynasties.[60] This also applied to al-Ghawrī, who, like other Mamluk rulers, apparently considered his *mamlūk* origin a severe drawback to presenting himself as a legitimate ruler.[61]

In addition to these typical Mamluk problems, al-Ghawrī and those around him faced multiple additional challenges in legitimating their status, establishing the sultan's aptitude for rulership, and fending off their enemies' strategies of counter-legitimation. For the sake of presentation, here we differentiate between internal and external factors, although it must be acknowledged that the two are often inseparably entangled.

Several internal reasons related directly to al-Ghawrī's person and the way he ascended to the sultanate. As discussed above,[62] al-Ghawrī became ruler only after a period of extended political insecurity that saw a rapid succession of claimants to the sultanate; claimants who, once in office, could not maintain their position. To the population of the realm, this must have demonstrated the contingency of any sultan's ascension to rule. The general feelings of uncertainty caused by the rapid change of rulers are expressed in a passage of al-ʿĀṣimī's Meccan chronicle: "The soldiers were happy about his [that is, al-Ghawrī's] ascension to rule because they were weary of the great number of [different] sultans and the swiftness with which their rule (*mulk*) passed. The common people were happy and enjoyed security for themselves and all of their belongings."[63] Although al-Ghawrī's tenure brought the quick succession of rulers to a temporary standstill, the preceding events undoubtedly affected late Mamluk perceptions of rulership.[64]

When al-Ghawrī took over the sultanate, it was by no means clear that he would be able to bring even temporary stability to Mamluk domestic politics.[65]

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59   Broadbridge, Legitimacy 94, 105, 107; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 13, 33–4, 65, 101, 170, 188, 194 (Mongols); Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 129 (Āq Qoyunlu Turkmens); Broadbridge, Legitimacy 94 (Armenians); Karateke, Legitimizing 25 (Ottomans). See also Muslu, *Ottomans* 135, 156, 184–5; Yosef, Term 14; Melvin-Koushki, Art 196, 214; Aigle, Les inscriptions 58. See section 6.2.2 below on this issue in al-Ghawrī's time.

60   Yosef, Term 15–8, 27. On Mamluk political marriages, see D'hulster and van Steenbergen, Family, esp. 75–6; Fuess, Politics 101–2.

61   See section 6.2.2 below.

62   Cf. section 2.1.2.1 above.

63   Al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 61.

64   Cf. Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung, esp. 29–31, 37–40, 44.

65   On the connection between legitimacy and stability of rule, see Kertzer, *Ritual* 38.

Again, al-Ghawrī was, as Peter M. Holt argued, "probably intended as a temporary expedient: he was already about sixty years old [when becoming Mamluk ruler], and he had not played an outstanding part in court politics."[66] Apparently, even among the military elite who chose al-Ghawrī as their leader, the sultan did not enjoy undivided and unquestioned authority, such that his commands were considered binding, as required according to Weber's definition of legitimacy.

Although al-Ghawrī nevertheless managed to maintain his position for over a decade, several other internal factors compromised the legitimacy of his reign and cast doubt on his qualities as a ruler. Among these, the economic situation of the realm and its consequences loomed large. As discussed above,[67] during its later period the Mamluk Sultanate went through a phase of economic transformations that many of its inhabitants interpreted as signs of crisis. The reasons for this situation were manifold, interrelated, and complex, but factors such as the interruption and diversion of transregional streams of commerce, outbreaks of the plague, climatic changes, the system of land use and labor allocation, as well as fluctuations in the monetary system seem to have contributed to a sense of crisis.[68] While the respective importance and precise effects of these factors are subject to debate, all the available evidence suggests that in response to the economic transformations, al-Ghawrī and the Mamluk ruling elite implemented a large-scale campaign to appropriate a significant share of available resources through taxation, confiscation, forced purchases, the sale of offices, and other forms of expropriation. The impact of these measures on the sultan's image, his reputation among the population at large, and the legitimacy of his rule were unmistakable, given that many of his schemes were considered contrary to well-established traditions of good rulership. As Toru Miura noted, because of these actions, al-Ghawrī acquired a reputation as a particularly unjust ruler.[69] While this characterization seems to go back, primarily, to Ibn Iyās' biased account and is not unanimously reflected in other sources, there can be no doubt that among his subjects, many of al-Ghawrī's fiscal measures had a negative impact on his prestige as a ruler.

The legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's reign was contested beyond the common people of the sultanate. As the recurrent troop mutinies during his reign

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66   Holt, Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī 552. See also Petry, *Twilight* 129–30; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159. On the often relatively old age of late Mamluk rulers, see Reinfandt, *Sultansstiftungen* 12.

67   Cf. sections 2.1.2.1 to 2.2.1 above.

68   Cf. section 2.2.1 above.

69   Miura, *Dynamism* 111–2. See also section 2.1.2.1 above.

showed, rank-and-file and leading members of the Mamluk military perceived al-Ghawrī as potentially replaceable and at times at least refused to obey his commands.[70] Given that many of the troop mutinies had financial motives, it is apparent that the discontent of large parts of the military was closely linked to what was perceived as an ongoing crisis in the Mamluk economy.[71] The fact that the Mamluk army did not achieve a single major victory under al-Ghawrī—which would have brought opportunities for looting—also must have contributed to the military's dissatisfaction. Given that success in battle was a central element of Mamluk claims for legitimacy, the recurring breakdowns in the military chain of command had extremely negative consequences for the indisputability of al-Ghawrī's status.

External challenges, especially Portuguese, Safawid, and Ottoman activities likewise threatened al-Ghawrī's position as ruler and ran counter to his legitimation efforts. As mentioned, the Portuguese naval activities in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea negatively affected long-distance maritime trade in the region, thus striking an additional blow to the strained economic situation of the sultanate. Moreover, Portuguese military actions along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula cast doubt on the ability of the Mamluk Sultanate to protect the sanctuaries of the Hijaz and ensure the security of the pilgrimage.[72]

Furthermore, the Portuguese envisioned their military presence in the Indian Ocean and its inlets as a continuation of earlier Christian crusades.[73] As such, the Portuguese naval warfare constituted more than just an economic and military threat to the Mamluks, but also created a considerable challenge to the very foundations of Mamluk claims for legitimacy as established during the early history of the sultanate when Mamluk troops defeated the crusader principalities in the Levant. Given that a significant part of Mamluk legitimacy rested on these early military victories,[74] the sudden reappearance of a sizable crusader force in the tenth/sixteenth century constituted both a threat and an opportunity for al-Ghawrī and the elite of the sultanate, regardless of whether or not the Mamluks knew that the Portuguese understood their military activities in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea as a crusade:[75] If the sultan had

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70   Cf. sections 2.1.2.1 to 2.1.2.3 above.

71   Clifford, Observations 259.

72   Cf. section 5.2.2 above.

73   Har-El, *Struggle* 12–3. See also Bacqué-Grammont and Kroell, *Mamlouks* 21; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 27; Stripling, *Turks* 35; Krämer, *Geschichte* 191.

74   Fuess, Politics 96–7. See also Holt, Position 246–7; Darling, *History* 103, 119; Northrup, Sultanate 255; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 3; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 35; Fuess, Ġazwah 271; Muslu, *Ottomans* 8; Ayalon, Transfer 58.

75   It is unclear whether the Mamluks knew of this Portuguese view.

managed to fight off the European invaders, he could present himself as following in the footsteps of the founding fathers of the sultanate and his claims for legitimacy would be supported by his military victories. But if the sultan was ultimately unable to fend off the European invaders, the damage to his reputation would most probably be disastrous. As discussed above, al-Ghawrī's tenure saw several military operations against the Portuguese, few of which were successful.[76] Hence, the Mamluk ruler not only failed to reap the benefits that a clear victory over the Christian sailors entailed, but was also unsuccessful in banning the risk of an embarrassing defeat in the future. Thus, the Portuguese remained a significant threat to the legitimacy of the sultan's rule.

Another factor that complicated al-Ghawrī's attempts to endow his rule with the prestige of legitimate authority was the meteoric rise of the Shiʿi Safawid Shāh Ismāʿīl (r. 906–30/1501–24), who, in his early years, approximated a textbook example of Weber's ideal type of charismatic ruler. While military engagements between the Mamluks and the Safawids remained local and limited,[77] the latter were a threat to Mamluk claims for legitimacy in so far as they embodied an alternative—and rival—type of legitimate Muslim rulership.[78] Among other factors, the Safawid Shāh laid claim to precisely the kind of military fortune that the Mamluks lacked, as demonstrated by the rapid conquest of greater Iran during the early years of the tenth/sixteenth century.[79] Moreover, in his followers' eyes, Shāh Ismāʿīl possessed the noblest ancestry possible, as he was said to be a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad.[80] Yet, what truly set him apart was his claim to fulfill several central messianic hopes of the Shiʿa. This claim culminated in the assertions made in his poetry that he was an agent of the twelfth Shiʿi *imām*, if not an *imām* himself,[81] the promised eschatological *mahdī*,[82] a prophetic figure,[83] or even an incarnation of the divine.[84] Even

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76 Cf. section 2.1.2.2 above.

77 Rabie, Relations 76–9; Clifford, Observations 257. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 82–3; Petry, *Twilight* 173–5, 203; Petry, *Protectors* 50.

78 See also Muslu, *Ottomans* 14, 166.

79 Savory, Ṣafawids 767; Brummett, *Seapower* 32.

80 Clifford, Observations 264–5. See also Peirce, *Harem* 160; Flemming, Genealogies 131–2.

81 Glassen, Schah 64, 68–9. See also Peirce, *Harem* 160, 162; Black, *History* 223–4; Gallagher, Poetry 370; Minorsky, Poetry 1031, 1039, 1042, 1049.

82 Glassen, Schah 65; Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 174. See also Dressler, Inventing 158; Moin, *Sovereign* 4, 76–7, 80; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 199; Gallagher, Poetry 369–71.

83 Dressler, Inventing 157. See also Glassen, Schah 64; Moin, *Sovereign* 77; Black, *History* 224; Gallagher, Poetry 370; Minorsky, Poetry 1026, 1031, 1039, 1042, 1048–9.

84 Dressler, Inventing 157. See also Glassen, Schah 64; Glassen, Krisenbewusstsein 175; Peirce, *Harem* 162; Moin, *Sovereign* 77; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 11, 199; Black, *History* 224; Gallagher, Poetry 365–6, 370; Minorsky, Poetry 1026, 1032, 1037, 1039, 1043, 1047, 1049.

though the Mamluk court invested considerable resources and interpretative energy into endowing al-Ghawrī with some of the most exalted religious roles in Sunni Islam,[85] countering the far-reaching messianic aspirations of Shāh Ismāʿīl on an equal footing appears to have been impossible.[86]

It is difficult to determine how persuasive the Safawid claims to exalted political and religious status were to Mamluk audiences. To many Egyptian and Syrian Sunni Muslims, most of the far-reaching assertions must have sounded like outright blasphemy.[87] The fact that none of the texts from al-Ghawrī's court analyzed in the present study pays any attention to Safawid religious claims likewise suggests that they were of little immediate significance to members of the Mamluk ruling elite. Nevertheless, we know that the Mamluks were familiar with at least some of Shāh Ismāʿīl's assertions about his rank as these appeared in Safawid diplomatic messages to Cairo.[88]

Whereas the rival Safawid claims for legitimacy were, because of their religious content, too different to pose an immediate threat to al-Ghawrī's political prestige, Mamluks and Ottomans "shared the same ideological world,"[89] as Cihan Yüksel Muslu noted. In this common world, Ottoman and Mamluk rulers competed for recognition, prestige, and legitimacy with more or less the same instruments.[90] In many ways, in this competition, the Ottomans bested their Mamluk rivals, with whom they were closely entangled in military and economic terms during the first years of the tenth/sixteenth century. Seeking to present themselves as pious Sunnis, like the Mamluks,[91] the Ottoman rulers waged successful wars against both European Christians and the Safawid Shiʿis; thus, they lived up to the Sunni ideal of waging *jihād* and *ghazwa* that the Mamluks largely failed to realize during this period.[92] Furthermore, the Ottomans laid claim to at least some of the prestige of the custodianship of the holy

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85   Cf. sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.4 above.

86   On the challenges the Safawids posed to the Ottoman legitimation of rule, see, e.g., recently Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 50.

87   See also Clifford, Observations 272–3.

88   Clifford, Observations 264–5.

89   Muslu, *Ottomans* 63.

90   Brummett, *Seapower* 53.

91   Imber, Ideals 147–53. See also Peirce, *Harem* 165–6; Karateke, Legitimizing 41; Imber, Myth 22–5.

92   Fuess, Ġazwah, offers a comparison of the Mamluk concept of *jihād* and the Ottoman concept of *ghazwa*. On the significance of military activities for Ottoman legitimation, see also Dressler, Inventing 165; Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 10; Imber, Ideals 139–48; Imber, Myth 7–13; Petry, *Protectors* 52; Karateke, Opium 118; Peirce, *Harem* 157–8; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 8–9, 158; Karateke, Legitimizing 42–6; Woodhead, Perspectives 172–3; Faroqhi, Symbols 619–20.

cities through their military support in the defense of the Hijaz.[93] On a personal level, Ottoman rulers had the advantage of being born to Muslim fathers and were thus free of the Mamluk stigma of pagan origins. Finally, the Ottoman rulers of the tenth/sixteenth century stood in a long unbroken line of dynastic rulership and thus boasted the type of genealogical legitimacy that Mamluk rulers lacked, for the most part.[94] As we shall see shortly, the Ottomans were aware of the significance of their dynastic history and repeatedly used it in their activities of self-legitimation vis-à-vis their Mamluk rivals.[95]

Taken together, multiple factors threatened the success of Mamluk claims for legitimacy in al-Ghawrī's time, both in the realm of the sultanate and beyond. Moreover, there is evidence that not only modern analysts, but even al-Ghawrī and members of his court perceived the sultan's legitimacy to be threatened and the Mamluk system of rule of the early tenth/sixteenth century to be suffering from a "crisis of legitimacy."[96]

First, the fact that several Mamluk rulers who directly preceded al-Ghawrī were deposed within months or even days not only clearly demonstrated the contingency of the ruler's person, but also showed that, in maintaining power, even someone whose rule was accepted by a significant share of the late Mamluk elite and who was properly invested with the sultanate could not expect his former supporters to continue to back his rule, nor could he depend on the prestige inherent in his office and the rituals through which his ascension to rule was performed.[97] Peter M. Holt noted: "In spite of the splendor and luxury that surrounded him [...] and the pompous ritual of his accession, the sultan occupied a precarious position. The caliph's delegation of authority counted

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93   Cf. section 5.2.2 above.

94   Dressler, Inventing 165. On Ottoman dynastic legitimation, see also Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 10; Imber, Ideals 146, 149–50; Imber, Myth 16–20; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 9–10; Karateke, Legitimizing 19–25, 31–3; Muslu, *Ottomans* 12, 31, 184–5; Fleischer, Authority 206–7, 209; Flemming, Genealogies 125–7; Berger, *Gesellschaft* 57–9; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 10; D'hulster, Caught 192–4; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 231–4. Note that the Ottomans sought to elevate their lineage further by tracing it back to the prophets Noah (cf. Irwin, Ibn Zunbul 10; Karateke, Legitimizing 24; Imber, Myth 16; Flemming, Genealogies 127–9; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 232; Çıpa, *Making* 124), Jacob, and Isaac (Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 232–3).

95   Cf. section 6.2.2 below.

96   I owe this term to Brummett, *Seapower* 51. On the related concept of "crisis of kingship" in the Islamicate world of the late middle period, see Markiewicz, *Crisis*, esp. 6–7, 176–7, 286.

97   On Mamluk rituals of sultanic investiture not well documented in al-Ghawrī's case, see ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 103–9; Holt, Structure 46–7; Holt, Position 238–9, 241–5; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 82–5; Bresc, Entrées 85–7; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 48–9.

for little in a crisis."[98] Thus, when he became ruler, al-Ghawrī must have known from the examples of his immediate predecessors that the legitimating impact of his investiture with the sultanate was limited.

Second, there is evidence that key figures in the Mamluk military perceived al-Ghawrī's rule as lacking the kind of prestige that would have made his command binding. In fact, they considered other candidates more qualified to rule and therefore tried to depose al-Ghawrī. Particularly in the early years of al-Ghawrī's reign, Ibn Iyās recounts several instances in which high-ranking *amīr*s or other figures schemed to take over the sultanate or to replace al-Ghawrī with people who enjoyed their support. In such situations, the sultan was forced to rely on violence, monetary incentives, or other means to retain his position and prevent an open rebellion.[99] In the final battle of Marj Dābiq, the treason of one of al-Ghawrī's *amīr*s, a man who hoped to inherit a significant share of the sultan's prerogatives under Ottoman suzerainty, was a decisive reason for the Mamluk defeat.[100] While other factors, such as the economic situation, the political mechanics of the sultanate,[101] or the personal ambitions of certain *amīr*s also contributed to these developments, there can be no doubt that they were also informed by a widespread understanding that al-Ghawrī's status as ruler was neither unalterable nor necessarily justified in itself.[102]

Third, in periods of crisis, al-Ghawrī himself apparently considered it possible to give up his office. On such occasions, he demonstrated to the members of his court and his subjects at large that, even in his own eyes, his ascension to rule was not irreversible. Ibn Iyās' chronicle includes no fewer than seven passages that narrate how the sultan ostensibly moved to abdicate, that he was said to ponder this possibility, or that rumors about his plan to take such a step spread in Cairo.[103] A typical passage describing such an incident deals with a widespread mutiny among the sultan's slave soldiers in Cairo during the year 920/1514–5. The sultan was only able to pacify the situation by offering substantial special payments to his troops.[104] Right after the announcement of these payments, the following incident took place:

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98   Holt, Position 248.

99   E.g. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 9–11, 73–4, 178, 315–6, 319, 430. See also Petry, *Twilight* 130–1, 134–6, 138–9; Petry, *Protectors* 37, 89–90.

100   Cf. section 2.1.2.3 above.

101   See Fuess, Politics 99–101; Haarmann, Regicide.

102   See also Petry, Institution 468.

103   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 7, 177, 241, 311–2, 314–5, 430, 484–5.

104   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 427–31.

On Wednesday, the 16th [of Dhū l-Ḥijja 920],[105] the sultan went down to the *maydān*, sat down there and distributed among the *mamlūk* recruits their cash payment for the month. Then, he had the leading overseers (*aghwāt*) of the barracks brought, showered them with words, and said to them: "If you want to make someone sultan other than me, I will step down from rule for him [i.e., this other person you have chosen] and you [can] send me any place you choose." They kissed the ground in front of him and said: "We do not have any master but you and we perish only below your feet (*mā namūt illā taḥt rijlayka*). We do not need a special payment from the sultan and are satisfied without any special payment."[106]

The sequence of actions outlined here by Ibn Iyās is paradigmatic for such courtly events as narrated in the chronicle: After realizing that his command was no longer considered binding by an influential group in the sultanate, the sultan offered to abdicate in front of representatives of the pertinent group. The latter unanimously rejected his offers and reassured the sultan discursively and symbolically of their obedience, thus confirming the ruler's status.

The context of these events, their uniform structure and outcome, as well their recurring character suggest that al-Ghawrī did not really intend to step down. Rather, from the accounts it appears that the sultan considered it useful—at least rhetorically—to risk his very position as ruler in order to receive an endorsement of his entitlement to rule. While this type of action temporarily stabilized and reaffirmed the sultan's position in times of crisis, it had negative implications for the sultan's legitimacy in the long term. After all, it demonstrated that the sultan perceived himself—probably quite realistically—as a ruler at the beck and call of the elite, who, at least theoretically, could be replaced at any time. Rather than endowing his rule with an aura of sacredness and inviolability, the sultan himself willingly and ostensibly put his status at the discretion of the elite, thus impairing his claim to legitimate authority.[107]

Fourth, foreign political actors apparently perceived the late Mamluk ruling elite's legitimacy likewise as shattered. In transregional communication, at times the Ottomans and Safawids treated the rulers of Egypt and Syria with so little respect that their messages bordered on, or indeed constituted, diplomatic insults. While early in his reign, contacts between al-Ghawrī and his Ottoman peer Bāyezīd II were friendly and cordial,[108] diplomatic communication

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105   Corresponding to 1 February 1515.
106   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 430.
107   On similar threats by Sultan Qāytbāy, see Frenkel, Search 274.
108   Petry, *Twilight* 179–80.

with the latter's son Selīm included manifestations of Ottoman disrespect for the Mamluk ruler. In a missive that arrived in Cairo in 921/1515, Selīm referred to himself with a higher form of address than he referred to al-Ghawrī, thus showing that he no longer viewed the Mamluk ruler as his full equal.[109] The Ottomans' sending of the severed heads of al-Ghawrī's subordinate ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla, the latter's son, and his vizier to the Mamluk ruler was another clear example of diplomatic provocation.[110] Doris Behrens-Abouseif is doubtlessly right in highlighting the "menacing" character of this gift, whose implied message she translates as: "You are next."[111]

The Safawids likewise showed their open contempt for the Mamluk ruler through several provocations which demonstrated that Ismāʿīl considered himself superior to al-Ghawrī.[112] These included imprisoning a Mamluk envoy for two years, from 916/1511 onward,[113] and the subsequent dispatch of the severed head of the Sunni ruler Khān Muḥammad Shaybānī—a coreligionist of the Mamluks—to Cairo.[114] The letter accompanying the head ridiculed al-Ghawrī's investments in horticulture and bragged about the Safawids' military strength.[115] A later diplomatic message from Shāh Ismāʿīl to al-Ghawrī likewise included insults and cast doubt on the fighting spirit of the Mamluks.[116] Moreover, this letter also included a full account of the Safawid claim to prophetic descent, thus implicitly highlighting the fact that the Mamluk rulers lacked a similar noble pedigree.[117] As W.W. Clifford argued, Shāh Ismāʿīl's diplomatic relations with the Mamluks showed that the Safawid ruler "challenge[d] publically Mamluk moral authority over Syria, the Ḥijāz and even Egypt itself."[118]

Rather than being a source of recognition and an instrument of the legitimation of Mamluk rule, in the tenth/sixteenth century, the sultanate's diplomatic interactions with its Muslim neighbors demonstrated how low the latter rated

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109   Petry, *Twilight* 210–1, based on Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 436.

110   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 462. Cf. also section 2.1.2.3 above.

111   Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 92 (both quotations). On severed heads as diplomatic gifts, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 134–5; Muslu, *Ottomans* 41; Melvin-Koushki, Art 193–4; Mauder, Head.

112   Clifford, Observations 263, 275.

113   Rabie, Relations 77, 79. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 83; Petry, *Twilight* 203; Mauder, Head.

114   Rabie, Relations 77–8; Clifford, Observations 264. See also Mauder, Head.

115   Rabie, Relations 78; Clifford, Observations 264. See also section 6.3.2 below as well as Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 82–3; Petry, *Twilight* 176–8; Mauder, Head.

116   Rabie, Relations 79. See also Mauder, Head.

117   Clifford, Observations 264–5.

118   Clifford, Observations 263.

the Mamluks' political status. This contempt had tangible consequences, as demonstrated by the Safawid and Ottoman infringements on Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz,[119] unfulfilled Safawid schemes to attack the Mamluk realm with the support of European allies,[120] and, most seriously, the outbreak of open Mamluk-Ottoman hostilities.[121]

Fifth, the substantial investments of economic, social, and cultural capital in activities of self-legitimation undertaken by al-Ghawrī and members of his court society bear witness to the fact that the ruler and his intimates perceived their social status and its legitimacy as threatened. They reacted to this apparent need for legitimation with heated activities of discursive and symbolic communication expressing and re-evaluating the intellectual, ceremonial, and performative foundations of Mamluk rulership in an attempt to overcome the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy. The following sections shed further light on these processes.

6.2   Rulership and Political Theory in the *majālis* and at al-Ghawrī's Court

It has long been customary to understand Mamluk politics as a continuous fight for political influence in which the key actors' character traits played a more important role than political thought and sophisticated ideologies about rule and rulership. Yet, as more recent scholarship at least tentatively indicates, political ideology potentially had an impact on how members of the Mamluk ruling elite thought about themselves and the political culture of their sultanate.[122] Nevertheless, the political thought of the courtly elite of the very late Mamluk period—and thus a central part of their shared social reality—remains hitherto largely terra incognita and is often not considered to be highly developed.[123] The accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* are one of the few source corpuses that allow for deeper insights into how the concept of rulership and rule were understood, enacted, and modified among members of the Mamluk court, as Robert Irwin demonstrated in a short essay.[124] In expanding and critically reviewing Irwin's work, the following sections use all known accounts of

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119   Cf. section 5.2.2 above.
120   Petry, *Twilight* 175. See also Muslu, *Ottomans* 172.
121   Cf. section 2.1.2.3 above.
122   Irwin, Thinking 38, 49.
123   Irwin, Thinking 37. See also Haarmann, Injustice 61–3; Petry, Paradox 182.
124   Irwin, Thinking 42.

al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, several mirrors-for-princes produced for this ruler or under his patronage, as well as several other sources as a—in a Mamluk context— uniquely comprehensive basis to elucidate concepts of political thought as discussed at al-Ghawrī's court and to show what modes of legitimation were current among members of the sultan's court society. Many of these debates focused on what Hakan Karateke called the "normative [...] aspect" of legitimacy that centers on the legal bases of legitimate rule and has to be distinguished from the "factual"[125] one.[126] Abstract issues of normative legitimacy are usually debated among legal specialists and members of the elite and often focus on questions such as whether or not rulers are appointed in congruence with divine will.[127]

In analyzing notions of legitimate rule and rulership at al-Ghawrī's court, the present study argues that, contrary to the assumption voiced in Irwin's essay, political thought at al-Ghawrī's court was, also and especially in its normative dimension, neither "essentially secular"[128] in character nor principally Persianate in origin.[129] Rather, thoroughly Islamic elements of political theory— such as the notion of the caliphate which C.E. Bosworth called a "purely Arab-Islamic concept of power"[130]—were central for political thought at al-Ghawrī's court. This does not mean, however that "Mamluk ideology [...] hinged consistently and exclusively on antiquated Islamic concepts,"[131] as had been argued in earlier scholarship. Mamluk political thinkers innovatively integrated, balanced, revised, and transformed notions and theories of both Islamic and non-Islamic backgrounds in their efforts to find answers to the pressing political and ideological needs of their time. In this way, the political thinking and culture of legitimation at the late Mamluk court proves to be part of larger currents in the Islamicate world of the time. As Leslie Peirce showed in her study of late middle and early modern Ottoman court culture, "the elaboration of multiple claims to legitimacy based most overtly on Muslim religious principles, but drawing on other political traditions as well" was "a characteristic feature of this period, not only among the Ottomans."[132] Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and the broader political

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125   Karateke, Legitimizing 14 (both quotations).
126   Karateke, Legitimizing 17.
127   Karateke, Legitimizing 18.
128   Irwin, Thinking 42.
129   Irwin, Thinking 42. See also Irwin, Thinking 40; section 4.2.8 above.
130   Bosworth, Mirrors 527.
131   Broadbridge, *Kingship* 12.
132   Peirce, *Harem* 160 (both quotations). See also Çıpa, *Making* 115–6; and more broadly Bauer, *Kultur* 340.

culture of his court offer a unique window into how the Mamluks participated in and contributed to the social construction of this multifaceted Islamicate courtly political culture.

6.2.1 *The Exemplary Rulers of the Past*

When discussing notions of ideal rulership and legitimate rule, members of al-Ghawrī's court often referred to representatives of earlier traditions of rule.[133] Engaging in this time-honored form of Islamicate political communication had several advantages: For the sultan, discursive and symbolic communicative references to exemplary rulers of the past offered valuable opportunities to demonstrate that he was rooted in earlier traditions of ideal governance and cared about the political notions associated with them. Al-Ghawrī thereby employed a strategy of legitimation typical for rulers holding traditional authority in the Weberian sense.[134]

This legitimating function of references to paragons of virtuous rule became especially obvious where the sultan and those around him explicitly connected al-Ghawrī to past rulers, be it by applying parts of their names or forms of address to him, emulating what was perceived to be their typical behavior, or even mimicking their physical appearances. By establishing such overt discursive, performative, and visual links to earlier rulers, al-Ghawrī and members of his court society explored alternatives to the genealogical type of legitimation so common to the Islamicate world of their time but unattainable to many Mamluk rulers.

For those around the sultan, referring to earlier traditions of ideal rulership was a way to signal that they possessed cultural capital that was valuable to al-Ghawrī and therefore justified the establishment of patronage relations.[135] Moreover, for the sultan's clients, adducing the ideal examples of past rulers and highlighting their commendable actions was one of the few means through which they could criticize the sultan's conduct without the risk of incurring his wrath.[136]

It seems that, for members of al-Ghawrī's court, three groups of rulers were especially well-suited to serve as role models: people connected to the pre-Islamic Indo-European tradition of kingship, members of Turkic sultanic dynasties pre-dating the Mamluk Sultanate, and finally, earlier Mamluk rulers. This is not to say that rulers belonging to other groups—such as the first four caliphs

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133   On this topic, see also Mauder, Read.
134   Cf. Frenkel, Nations 61–2, 74. See also von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 47.
135   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.
136   I owe this thought to Marlow, Surveying 530.

or the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad—do not appear in our sources from al-Ghawrī's court as praiseworthy examples of rulership. They certainly do.[137] However, it seems that al-Ghawrī and those around him did not view the Mamluk sultan as standing in a direct line with these figures in the same way as he did with regard to the representatives of the three groups mentioned. Perhaps the fact that the ʿAbbasid caliphs of Cairo were regarded as continuing the line of caliphal rule suggested to members of al-Ghawrī's court that other rulers were better suited as role models for Mamluk sultanic rulership, although al-Ghawrī did take the court culture of the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad as a model for his own court in other aspects not directly connected to notions of ideal rulership.

In several instances, we have seen how pre-Islamic Indo-European kings played an important role in the intellectual and literary life at al-Ghawrī's court, as the court society's interest in the *Shāhnāme* makes particularly clear.[138] Moreover, al-Ghawrī was the only Mamluk ruler we know of who was ever referred to by the Persian title of *shāhānshāh* (king of kings) in his correspondence.[139] However, thus far, we have not discussed the figure that, according to our sources, uniquely personified the pre-Islamic Indo-European tradition of kingship at al-Ghawrī's court: Alexander the Great, who appears in our sources as "Iskandar" or as "Dhū l-Qarnayn" (lit., the one with the two horns). The latter name is mentioned in the Quran[140] and Muslims of the middle period routinely identified him with the historical Alexander. Thus, the exploits of Iskandar Dhū l-Qarnayn were integrated into the Quranic vision of history and often understood by premodern Arabic authors as part of the history of pre-Islamic Persia,[141] an interpretation that Yuriko Yamanaka called the "Iranisation"[142] of the figure of Alexander.[143] In the present study, this "Iranisation" allows us to subsume both pre-Islamic Iranian kings and Alexander under the category of the pre-Islamic Indo-European tradition of rule, although this phrase is, of course, foreign to our sources. This phrase is also helpful as it allows us to acknowledge that the image of Alexander in our sources is primarily based, somewhat surprisingly, on Greek, not Iranian, traditions.

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137   See, e.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 19–21 (Hārūn al-Rashīd); 148 (Abū Bakr); 201 (ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb). For apparently unique efforts to liken al-Ghawrī to Ibn Ṭūlūn (r. 254/868–270/884), see Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 192ᵛ–194ʳ, 312ʳ.

138   Cf. sections 3.1.1.2, 3.1.1.3, 4.1.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.4, 4.2.5, 4.2.8, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3 above.

139   Moukarzel, Embassies 698; Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

140   Q 18:83–98.

141   Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 21, 23, 26, 30, 204, 206–7, 225.

142   Yamanaka, Ambiguïté 341.

143   See also Tor, Shadow 155.

As Faustina Doufikar-Aerts showed in her *Alexander Magnus Arabicus* (2010), the extraordinarily rich Arabic material on the figure of Alexander can be subdivided into four categories: (1) material directly related to the originally Greek tradition on the life of Alexander associated with the name of Pseudo-Callisthenes, (2) wisdom material centering on the figure of Alexander that often takes the forms of aphorisms, letters, or short anecdotes, (3) material inherently related to the Quranic figure of Alexander Dhū l-Qarnayn that looms large in *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets) texts, and (4) material belonging or connected to the popular Arabic epic about Alexander known as *Sīrat al-Iskandar*.[144]

In our sources from al-Ghawrī's courts, only material of Doufikar-Aerts' categories 2 and 3 figures prominently. Both *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*[145] and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*[146] include sections on Alexander Dhū l-Qarnayn consisting of the kind of material that Doufikar-Aerts identifies as typical for her category 3. These passages deal with Alexander not primarily as a political ruler, but rather as an important figure in the Quranic history of salvation prior to Muḥammad that appeared in literary form in the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* genre. As such, the presence of this kind of material in our sources underlines again the significance of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* for the intellectual and religious life of al-Ghawrī's court.[147] At the same time, this material is of little significance to the subject of the present sections, as the pertinent passages do not introduce Alexander as a paragon of good rulership.

In contrast, the material belonging to category 2 and circulating at al-Ghawrī's court is of particular interest here. There is evidence that this type of wisdom material on Alexander had entered Arabic literature before the middle of the second/eighth century[148] through translations and adaptions of Greek gnomic texts. These processes of translation and adaption took place primarily in courtly contexts, a fact that points to the close connection between wisdom material on Alexander and courtly discourses about ideal rule.[149]

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144   Cf. Doufikar-Aerts, Romance 506; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* xxv, 8–11. On material belonging to Doufikar-Aerts' types, see, e.g., (1) Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 3–91; Manteghi, *Tradition* 10–9; (2) Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165–6; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 93–133; (3) Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 135–92; (4) Doufikar-Aerts, Romance; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 195–367.

145   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 36ʳ–37ʳ, 44ʳ–44ᵛ.

146   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 248.

147   See section 4.2.4 above.

148   Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 106.

149   Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 95, 105, 133.

All specimens of this type of material from al-Ghawrī's court are found in the same source: the subsections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* introduced as *al-munāsib* and *al-khātima* that al-Sharīf appended at the end of his descriptions of the *majālis*. As argued above, these should not be understood as part of al-Sharīf's account of the sessions, but as the author's later additions intended to underline the literary qualities of the work.[150] As noted, Irwin's above-mentioned essay overlooked this important structural characteristic of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, misunderstood the sections in question as part of the accounts of the *majālis* proper, and therefore arrived at erroneous conclusions about the discussions on political theory in the salons.[151] Furthermore, Irwin's study also incorrectly characterized the Alexander figure depicted in these sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as "a half-Persian legendary seeker of knowledge and eternal life as portrayed in the *Shāhnāmeh*,"[152] thus ignoring the Greek gnomological background of the pertinent material.[153] Yet, although al-Sharīf's *al-munāsib* and *al-khātima* sections were not intended as literary reflections of what was said and done in al-Ghawrī's salons, they are undoubtedly relevant to a study of the legitimation of rule and notions of rulership at al-Ghawrī's court. After all, they were produced by a member of the court society as part of a courtly relation of patronage and were intended to be read by the ruler and members of his court.

The passages in question attest to the significance of originally non-Islamic material for the political communication at the late Mamluk court. Still, this does not imply that they necessarily stand in conflict with Islamic notions of rulership and ideal governance or even form part of a secular counter-discourse. As mentioned above,[154] Deborah G. Tor argued that originally non-Islamic—and here especially Persian—notions of political thought were integrated into the Islamicate intellectual tradition as an "alternative paradigm."[155] This paradigm did not stand in opposition to earlier Islamic notions of ideal rule, but supplemented, enriched, and completed them.[156] Tor likened this pro-

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150   Cf. section 3.1.1.2 above.

151   Cf. section 4.2.8 above.

152   Irwin, Thinking 43.

153   Yet, Irwin, Thinking 43, noted that "the *Shāhnāme* does not seem to be the source for the precepts of Alexander as relayed in the soirees." On Alexander in the *Shāhnāmeh* and the connection to the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition and the *Sīrat al-Iskandar*, see Doufikar-Aerts, Romance 509; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 13, 80; Manteghi, Alexander; Manteghi, *Tradition* 46–70; Yamanaka, Ambiguïté.

154   See section 4.2.8 above.

155   Tor, Islamisation 116.

156   Tor, Islamisation 116.

cess to the way Muslims received and adopted the Greek tradition of medicine, which over time became part of the Islamicate intellectual cosmos.[157] For her, genuinely Islamic and originally non-Islamic traditions of political thinking became, over the course of Islamicate history, "one double-stranded, internally consistent, and intertwined heritage."[158] Mutatis mutandis, Tor's observations also apply to the integration of Greek wisdom material on Alexander the Great into the Islamicate tradition of political thought, which it supplemented and enriched.

Let us now turn to the material itself, which usually takes the form of aphorisms attributed to Alexander or short anecdotes about him. In these passages Alexander appears as a wise king reflecting primarily on what it means and takes to be a ruler. The following examples are all from *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya*:

> **We conclude** this *majlis* with a statement by Alexander. He said: "The ruler should obey God Most High, since the happiness of the subjects lies in obeying the rulers, and the happiness of the rulers lies in obeying God."[159]

> It was said to Alexander: "Why do you exalt your teacher more than you exalt your father?" **Answer:** Alexander said: "Because my father is the reason for my fugacious life, and my teacher is the reason for my eternal life."[160]

> It was said that a group of notables entered the audience (*khidma*) of Alexander. They said to him: "God made the lands that you rule far and wide. Take more women so that your children become numerous and your memory continues thanks to their ongoing existence." Alexander said to them: "The legacy of rulers continues through agreeable moral conduct and sublime regulations. It is not fitting for the one who has overcome men to be overcome by women."[161]

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157   Tor, Islamisation 116.
158   Tor, Islamisation 121. See also Rosenthal, Justice 100.
159   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ms) 15–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 15.
160   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ms) 35. On this aphorism, which appears in numerous texts, see Dou-fikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 117–8. Therefore, here and below, it is not possible to pinpoint its source.
161   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ms) 92. On this aphorism, which appears in numerous texts, see Dou-fikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 114.

Alexander said: "Without knowledge and justice, a dynasty (*dawla*) does not last and a kingdom does not remain in a proper state. Everything in the world lasts only through the two."[162]

A man with shabby clothes came to Alexander and spoke in the most splendid way. He was asked questions and gave answers, participated in discussions, and hit the mark [with what he said]. Alexander said to him: "If your clothes were like your witticism (*nuqaṭ*), there would be no one in the world like you." He said: "Oh ruler, as for my words, I have power over them. As for beautiful clothes, you have power over them." Thereupon, [Alexander] gave orders to dress him in superb clothes.[163]

Alexander was asked: "Which sultan is the most virtuous one?" He said: "The one in the shadow of whose justice the virtuous ones feel safe and of whom the evildoers are afraid."[164]

Though attributed to Alexander, most of this material—much of which could also come from a mirror-for-princes[165]—is essentially no different from that associated with other paragons of ideal rulership in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[166] The following passage, which parallels Alexander's wisdom with that of an ancient Iranian king, is a case in point:

It was said to Alexander: "King Dārāb's[167] army encompasses 300,000 men." Alexander said in reply: "The butcher is not afraid of the large number of the sheep." It was said to Anūshirwān: "The army of the sultan of the Abyssinians and the Sudanese encompasses 400,000 men." Anūshirwān said: "Do not be afraid of them, since a little fire consumes much firewood."[168]

Still, Alexander stands out in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as a paragon of ideal rulership who is mentioned most in the text; he appears in more than three

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162   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 148–9.

163   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 166. On this aphorism, which appears in numerous texts, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 116–7.

164   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 187.

165   On Alexander material in Arabic mirrors-for-princes works, see, e.g., Bosworth, Administrative Literature 165–6; Marlow, Advice.

166   For a similar observation regarding mirrors-for-princes works, see Tor, Islamisation 119.

167   On him, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander*, Index s.v. "Dārāb/Dārā."

168   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 112–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34. On this passage, see also Irwin, Thinking 44.

dozen instances.[169] Moreover, while most of the Alexander material is generic and could be attributed to other figures as well, some aphorisms and anecdotes on the ruler are so closely linked to the figure of Alexander in Arabic literature[170] that we can conclude that the very figure of the Macedonian ruler—and not just the wisdom material circulating under his name—was of genuine interest to members of al-Ghawrī's court.

The reason for this fascination with the figure of Alexander lay in the fact that this ruler—or rather his image in Arabic literature—brought together several elements attractive to monocratic Islamicate rulers of the late middle period: as a renowned conqueror, a "philosopher-king"[171] and ruler of much of the known world, according to the Quran, Alexander enjoyed God's protection, having proven himself a staunch defender of monotheism.[172] Moreover, Alexander united the kingly virtues of piety,[173] wisdom,[174] justice, generosity, and courage which he also expected from others, as the quoted passages from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* show. Hence Alexander constituted an ideal role model and figure of identification for Islamicate rulers, including al-Ghawrī, who sought to be seen as part of a tradition of legitimate and ideal rulership.

There is evidence that the sultan and the members of his court actively emphasized the parallels between al-Ghawrī and the Macedonian king to promote an metonymic identification of the two men. This took place on at least two communicative levels: (1) in textual communication as represented by *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and (2) by establishing a physical link between the two rulers through a conscious manipulation of the Mamluk sultan's appearance.

(1) We can identify three textual practices that link al-Ghawrī with Alexander in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. First, the Alexander material quoted above envisions Alexander's activities, religious convictions, and status as a ruler in typically Mamluk terms. Alexander's audience is referred to as a *khidma*; during it, dignitaries paid their respects the way they did in Mamluk political cul-

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169   See also Frenkel, Nations 71; Irwin, Thinking 43.

170   Note, e.g., the material on Alexander's encounter with the king of China (al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 244–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 123–6) and his consolation letter to his mother (al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 190–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 76–7), are both well-established parts of the Arabic Alexander material, cf. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 20, 26, 40–1, 84 and Index s.v. "China"; 20, 86, 102, 120–3 and Index s.v. "Letter of Consolation."

171   Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 102, 110. See also Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 113–20.

172   On Alexander's monotheism, cf. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 137.

173   See also Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 81, 89–90.

174   See also Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 89, 94–5.

ture.[175] Moreover, Alexander preaches that obedience to the one God is a ruler's primary duty, thus, he is presented as clearly operating in a religious cosmos compatible with Sunni Islam. Finally, as the above-quoted aphorism about the qualities of the most virtuous ruler makes clear, Alexander and those around him were envisioned as so deeply integrated into the world of Mamluk politics that they took for granted that ideal rulers were neither kings nor emperors, but sultans.

Second, several passages in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* explicitly state that al-Ghawrī fulfills the qualifications of a perfect ruler, as set by the philosopher-king Alexander. Note the following examples:

> Alexander was asked: "What is the best state of affairs for the subjects?" He said: "When their ruler has a brilliant mind, sound judgment, and is knowledgeable in philosophy (ḥikma)." He was asked: "What is the worst state of affairs for the subjects?" He said: "If the ruler lacks these qualities." […]
>
> Praise and glory be to God that these qualities are all present in His Excellency the sultan of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the noblest ruler on Earth […] al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū l-Naṣr […] Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.[176]

> Alexander said: "The best ruler is the one who is continuously remembered for [his] justice, and whose virtuous deeds are sought to be recorded after him."
>
> Praise and glory be to God that these two qualities are both present in the greatest sultan, al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū l-Naṣr […] Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.[177]

In these passages al-Ghawrī is presented not merely as a legitimate sovereign, but as an ideal ruler according to Alexander's standards. By using this type of originally non-Islamic material as a point of reference, al-Sharīf provided his patron al-Ghawrī with a universal aura of legitimacy that transcended, but did not contradict Islamic notions of ideal rulership.[178]

Third, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* clearly envisions al-Ghawrī as, at least metaphorically, a re-embodiment of the Macedonian king, by calling him

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175   On *khidma*, see section 1.2.1 above.

176   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 107–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30. See also Irwin, Thinking 43.

177   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 143; (ed. ʿAzzām) 55. Irwin, Thinking 43, mistranslates the first part of the quotation.

178   This argument was inspired by Tor, Islamisation 116.

Iskandar al-dawarān or "Alexander of the age."[179] While it must be acknowledged that numerous other Mamluk[180] and non-Mamluk[181] rulers were also addressed in this and similar ways, in al-Ghawrī's case, this apparently had a far-reaching transregional impact. Even an outside observer such as Martin Baumgarten listed the phrase "who at this time is a second Alexander"[182] as an important element of the sultan's customary forms of address in diplomatic exchanges with European polities.

(2) The members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* were not in agreement on the issue of whether Alexander the Great and the Quranic Dhū l-Qarnayn were the same person and if so, whether the name Dhū l-Qarnayn meant that Alexander actually had two horns on his head.[183] However, for al-Ghawrī, the situation was apparently clear: In a passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, we find the sultan endorsing the interpretation that Alexander and Dhū l-Qarnayn were indeed two names that referred to one person. Moreover, in the sultan's view, the term Dhū l-Qarnayn was not to be understood metaphorically as indicating that Alexander had conquered the East and the West, but meant that the Macedonian king literally had two horns on his head.[184]

These questions were not just of historical or exegetical interest for al-Ghawrī, but concerned a central element of his physical appearance on courtly occasions. As Albrecht Fuess showed, building on Ibn Iyās, in 902/1496 the highest-ranking members of the late Mamluk elite began to wear a peculiar type of headgear known as *takhāfīf allatī bi-l-qurūn al-ṭiwāl*, that is, "light turbans that have long horns."[185] The Mamluk chronicler explicitly linked this practice to the model of Dhū l-Qarnayn[186] and stated that this type of headgear was the exclusive prerogative of Egyptian rulers, as "the large light turbans

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179   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 118; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38. For the similar appellation *Iskandar al-zamān*, see Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 8.

180   For Mamluk rulers using similar titles, see, e.g., Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *al-Nūr* 49; Frenkel, Nations 71; Newhall, *Patronage* 75–6, 117; Troadec, Baybars 144; van Steenbergen, Discourse 9; Aigle, Les inscriptions 73–5; Aigle, Legitimizing 233–5; Amitai, Remarks 47–8, 50; Moukarzel, Embassies 698. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 35–6, lists *Iskandar al-zamān* as a customary sultanic honorific.

181   For non-Mamluk rulers using similar titles, see Aigle, Les inscriptions 74; Flemming, Genealogies 132–4; Bosworth, Laḳab 629; Arbel, République 121–2, 128–9; D'hulster, Caught 198, 233; Fleischer, Mahdi 45; Lellouch and Michel, Introduction 40–1; Trausch, Aibak 216–7.

182   Baumgarten, Travels 370.

183   Cf. Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 7ʳ; 36ʳ–37ʳ. For the broader context, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander* 145–50.

184   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 189–90.

185   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 340. I owe this and the following two quotations to Fuess, Between 161.

186   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iii, 340.

with long horns have become the crown (*tāj*) of the sultans of Egypt, as the crown of the Persian great kings used to be."[187] These passages show that the Mamluks sought to emulate pre-Islamic practices of rulership associated with the monarchs of ancient Persia and in particular the figure of Dhū l-Qarnayn.[188]

As Fuess convincingly suggested, the two passages in Ibn Iyās indicate that while this headgear was first used by high-ranking *amīr*s, in al-Ghawrī's time it became the exclusive privilege of Mamluk rulers who used it as the functional equivalent of the various types of crowns worn by royalty in Europe.[189] As such, it was noted by several foreign visitors. In the account of the Venetian ambassador Domenico Trevisan's audience with al-Ghawrī, the former's secretary Zaccaria Pagani described the Mamluk ruler as follows: "Il avait sur la tête un très grand fez avec deux cornes hautes d'un demi-bras."[190] A European portrait of al-Ghawrī included in an eleventh-/sixteenth-century print of a work by the Italian historian Paolo Giovio (d. 959/1552) shows the sultan with this type of headgear (see cover image of the second volume of the present book). While it is not clear on what basis the portrait was painted, its similarity to contemporaneous written descriptions suggests that it is quite a faithful representation of the Mamluk headdress in question.[191]

By wearing this distinctive headgear, al-Ghawrī not only dramatized his claim for exalted status and his connection to Alexander the Great, but also, through this conscious manipulation of his physical appearance, literally became *dhū l-qarnqayn*, that is, "the one with two horns" when he appeared before foreign dignitaries and members of his court. This form of embodiment of Alexander Dhū l-Qarnqayn by the sultan is without known parallel or precedent in Mamluk history. It bears witness to the abilities of al-Ghawrī and his court to find innovative communicative strategies in order to present the sultan as a member of a time-honored tradition of legitimate rule. As Ibn Iyās' comments show, the communicative intent of these measures was not lost to others, even to audiences outside the court. To Ibn Iyās, it was obvious that by donning the large turban with the two horns, al-Ghawrī performatively integrated himself into a pre-Islamic political tradition of ideal rulership. Hence, we

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187   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 332. On this headgear, see also Mayer, *Costume* 16–7, 30.
188   See also Fuess, Between 161; Fuess, Sultans 78–80.
189   Fuess, Between 191. On *amīr*s wearing horns, see also Martyr, *Legatio* 242–3.
190   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 184. See also Fuess, Sultans 78. On the sultan wearing a headgear with six horns, see Fuess, Between 163; Fuess, Sultans 80–1.
191   For a later image depicting the sultan with the same kind of headgear, see Fuess, Between 163; Fuess, Sultans 81, 91.

can assume that this conscious choice of a novel form of headgear was at least partially successful in communicating the sultan's claim to be the "Alexander of the age" to broad audiences.

The second group that members of al-Ghawrī's court viewed as particularly well-suited role models for rulers were representatives of Turkic sultanic dynasties pre-dating the Mamluk Sultanate. By far the most prominent member of this category was Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030). As seen above, al-Ghawrī employed literary patronage as a strategic device to establish a linkage with this highly-revered ruler by having the Persian *Shāhnāme* that was originally written for Maḥmūd translated into versified Old Ottoman Turkish.[192] Here, we focus on the role of Maḥmūd of Ghazna in the texts from al-Ghawrī's court, both as a political leader and as an example of ideal rulership.[193]

Unlike Alexander the Great, in his capacity as ruler Maḥmūd of Ghazna received ample attention not only in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, but also in other works originating from al-Ghawrī's court, most notably *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*.[194] While the *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* includes eight sometimes very long textual units that refer directly to the Ghaznawid sultan, in its overview of Islamic history, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* features a comprehensive discussion of Maḥmūd's life and deeds.[195] Here, the section on Maḥmūd is one of the longest dedicated to any non-prophetic figure.

The image of Maḥmūd of Ghazna that emerges from these two sources is remarkably coherent. It focuses on two notions: Maḥmūd as the paragon of a decidedly Islamic type of just rule on the one hand and as the focal figure of debates about dynastic legitimation on the other hand. A passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* illustrates how our sources deal with the first of these notions:

> It was said that Maḥmūd al-Ghaznawī—may God have mercy on him— wanted to pay a visit (*ziyāra*) to one of the friends [of God] (*awliyāʾ*). He traveled for one month until he reached the land of the *shaykh*. He sent an envoy to the *shaykh* and said: "Tell him that we traveled a distance of one month because we want to visit you. We have arrived at the gate of your city. You must come out to the city gate so that the sultan [can] visit you."

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192 Cf. section 4.2.5 above.

193 On the image of Maḥmūd of Ghazna at al-Ghawrī's court, see also Irwin, Thinking 43, 48.

194 Additional material on Maḥmūd of Ghazna's image in the context of al-Ghawrī's court as the patron of the *Shāhnāme* is included in Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi iii, 1971–85.

195 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 25ᵛ–29ᵛ.

> The *shaykh* said: "We have no need for the sultan's visit." Then the sul-
> tan sent [the envoy] a second time and said: "Tell him: Have you not read
> the saying of Him Most High: 'Obey God and the Messenger, and those
> in authority among you'?" [Q 4:59] The *shaykh* said: "It is mandatory to
> obey those in authority in accordance with the Book [that is, the Quran]
> and the *sunna*. God Most High did not command us in His Book to visit
> the sultan." This reply from him pleased [Maḥmūd], and he rode to the
> *shaykh* to visit him.[196]

This narrative shows Sultan Maḥmūd as engaging in a religious practice that,
as we have seen, was of considerable significance to Sunni Muslims of the late
Mamluk period: the visitation (*ziyāra*) of famous religious men.[197] Maḥmūd,
as the only named character, is clearly the central figure of this story, in which
he is shown making great efforts to meet a famous *shaykh*. Once he arrived at
the *shaykh*'s city, the sultan expected the latter to demonstrate a modicum of
respect by coming out to greet the ruler. When the *shaykh* refused, Maḥmūd
insisted on the kind of obedience he considered his due, according to the Qur-
anic verse 4:59, which has long been cited as a justification of political authority
in Islamicate societies.[198] However, the *shaykh* countered Maḥmūd's call for
obedience by stating that the Quran and the prophetic *sunna* defined how
one must obey a ruler. Thus, he argued that the foundations of Islam not only
ranked above all forms of worldly rule, but also delimited its scope. Accordingly,
Muslims had to obey rulers only in so far as their commands aligned with Qur-
anic and prophetic injunctions. Maḥmūd is depicted as agreeing to this model
of Islamic rule by favorably receiving the *shaykh*'s reply and going to the latter's
lodging as his guest, thus accepting his authority.

The portrayal of Maḥmūd as a pious and just Muslim ruler who respects
Islamic notions of ideal governance also informs the following story from
Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya:

> It was said that Sultan Maḥmūd gathered the Jews and asked them: "What
> do you say about Jesus?" They said: "We killed him and crucified him."
> The sultan said: "And did you pay the blood money (*diya*) for him?" They
> said: "No." He said: "By God, you will not get away from me until you
> have given me the blood money for him." Then they gave him 10,000

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196 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 9–10; (ed. ʿAzzām) 8–9.
197 Cf. section 5.1.2 above.
198 See, e.g., Lambton, Theory 51–2; Lambton, Quis 139; Hassan, *Longing* 85, 114, 135; Martel-
     Thoumian, Gouvernement 278, 305; Meisami, Rulers 81.

*dirham*s. He said: "By God, do not take the blood money for a prophet to be like the blood money for a Copt. You will only get away from me for 40,000 *dirham*s." Then, Sultan Maḥmūd also gathered the Christians and asked them whether Moses or Jesus was more excellent. They said: "Jesus brought the dead back to life, whereas Moses met a man, struck him with his fist, killed him and the latter died. Jesus talked to the people in the cradle, whereas Moses said, after forty years, 'Untie my tongue, so that they may understand my words'" [Q 20:27–8]. Thereupon, the sultan took immeasurable and endless [amounts of] money from them and gave orders to kill them, because, according to all religious laws, it is mandatory to believe in all prophets.[199]

This story also appears in a similar form in the section of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* dealing with the figure of Jesus.[200] There, the ruler who summoned the Jews remains nameless. However, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the narrative clearly adds to the picture of Maḥmūd of Ghazna as a Muslim ruler who implements Islamic legal norms—even if this means demanding blood money in a case one millennium old. Although here we are obviously not dealing with the minutes of a proper Islamic legal procedure, but with a literary text intended to make a statement of proper rulership, the narrative takes up elements of Islamic law, sometimes in astonishing detail. By demanding the blood money from the Jewish community, Maḥmūd applied—although very loosely and in a non-technical way—the Islamic legal concept of *lawth*, according to which a community can be sued for blood money if there is reason to believe that an unknown individual from among its members committed murder.[201] Moreover, the blood money of 10,000 *dirham*s, if Jesus is treated as a member of the Christian community, is in line with Islamic—and here specifically Ḥanafī—legal literature.[202] Thus, Sultan Maḥmūd is depicted as—at least symbolically—implementing Islamic legal norms, although in this story, it remains unclear whether Maḥmūd really believed that "the Jews" had killed Jesus—an assumption that runs counter to the Quran, which teaches that while some of the People of the Book claimed to have killed Jesus, he is in fact still alive.[203]

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199   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 46–7.

200   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 46ʳ–46ᵛ.

201   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 321.

202   Al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāya* viii, 69–72. I could not locate any evidence that 40,000 *dirham*s constituted the appropriate blood money for a prophet.

203   Cf. Q 4:165. Here I follow the most widespread Sunni interpretation of this verse. On its interpretation, see Lawson, *Crucifixion*.

This point is even more noteworthy since in all other aspects the story conforms very closely to Quranic teachings about Jesus and Moses. When "the Christians" describe the two prophets' words and deeds, they quote the Quran verbatim and refer to Jesus' speaking in the cradle, as mentioned in Q 3:46, but not in the Bible.

Maḥmūd's behavior toward the non-Muslim population of his realm constitutes another central aspect of Maḥmūd's image in this narrative. He is depicted as a ruler with a pronounced interest in the religious life of his subjects in general and their proper demonstration of respect toward those considered prophets in particular. Given what we know about the religious atmosphere of late Mamluk Egypt, these topics clearly mattered a great deal to late Mamluk audiences. As discussed above, al-Ghawrī and the members of his court were particularly interested in learning about the lives and deeds of the prophets predating Muḥammad. This pronounced respect for earlier prophets found expression in the lavish decoration of their sepulchers, to which the sultan dedicated considerable economic capital.[204] Furthermore, like Maḥmūd in the anecdote, at times al-Ghawrī took drastic measures to defend the honor of prophets; this included the execution of people found guilty of insulting them.[205]

Maḥmūd's behavior in the story quoted above confirms that al-Ghawrī was right in doing his utmost to protect the honor of prophets. Furthermore, by listening to and possibly discussing this anecdote, the members of the sultan's inner circle indicated their support for continued action against anyone who vilified the memory of God's prophets. By implementing this strict policy, al-Ghawrī could present his rule, both to himself and his court, as standing in the tradition of Maḥmūd as a paragon of ideal Muslim rulership.

Taken together, the two anecdotes about Maḥmūd analyzed so far stand out for their decidedly Islamic character. They are based on Islamic notions of prophethood and the proper veneration of prophets, demand the implementation of Islamic law, endorse Muslim practices of piety such as *ziyāra*, and include references to or quotations from the Quran. Thus, this material presents Maḥmūd in a much more Islamic fashion than the presentation of Alexander analyzed earlier. Although Alexander appeared in this material as a pious monotheist, his religious identity was far less clearly defined than that of Maḥmūd of Ghazna. While the Alexander of our sources personifies universal political virtues, Maḥmūd of Ghazna is depicted as the role model of a

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204   Cf. section 4.2.4 above.
205   Cf. section 5.2.1 above.

distinctively Islamic type of rule that pays special attention to Quranic regulations, religious notions of justice, and Muslim practices of piety.

This image of Maḥmūd of Ghazna as a pious and just ruler fits in well with what we know about his reputation in the Islamicate world of the middle period more broadly. Muslim authors of this period not only viewed Maḥmūd as the head of a court known for its refined cultural life and splendor[206]— an aspect that might have contributed to the attention paid to him by those around al-Ghawrī—, but they also saw him also as a staunch and pious champion of Islam, known for his generosity and military as well as political achievements in the name of religion.[207] Indeed, much of Maḥmūd's fame rests on his exploits as a *mujāhid* (fighter in *jihād*). In the late middle period when large-scale military victories of Muslim forces against non-Muslim polities were often more a distant memory than an experienced reality, Maḥmūd's raids and conquests in central and southern Asia distinguished him as an example of a type of Muslim leader almost unknown in his time.[208] Moreover, later accounts often saw Maḥmūd as a particularly well-educated and learned ruler who was knowledgeable in Islamic—and especially Ḥanafī—law and who was known to compose Persian verses.[209] Given that Maḥmūd was also perceived as the most powerful ruler of the Islamicate world of his time,[210] as a just judge,[211] and as a non-Arab like almost all members of the Mamluk military elite, it is obvious why he not only appears as the Muslim political leader par excellence in many mirrors-for-princes,[212] but also in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.

Thus, while the anecdotes about Maḥmūd analyzed so far fall squarely within what we could call the standard tradition about the Ghaznawid ruler in the later middle period, the material that pertains to the second notion mentioned earlier, and in which Maḥmūd appears as the focal figure of debates about dynastic legitimation, has a distinctly Mamluk character. Indeed, the full significance of this material can only be understood in the context of the Mamluks' status in the transregional culture of the Islamicate world. But first, let us turn to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, both of which include, albeit in differing versions, the following anecdote:

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206   Meisami, Panegyric 443; Bosworth, Mahmud 85. See also Subtelny, Art 145.
207   Meisami, Genres 239, 248.
208   Bosworth, Mahmud 87. See also Bosworth, Mahmud 88, 90; Meisami, Rulers 79–81.
209   Bosworth, Mahmud 87, 89.
210   Bosworth, Mahmud 88.
211   Bosworth, Mahmud 90. See also Darling, *History* 109.
212   Bosworth, Mahmud 89.

Our lord the sultan said: Sultan Maḥmūd wanted to obtain *mamlūk*s. They brought [the *mamlūk*s] to him and the favorite (*khāṣṣ*) Ayās said: "Oh sultan, buy me. By God Most High, I have knowledge of stones, riding beasts, and human beings." [Maḥmūd] bought him and left him in the barracks. Then, a large pearl of high value was brought to the sultan and there was a disagreement about its value. The sultan said: "Bring in Ayās!" When Ayās looked at the pearl, he said: "There is a worm (*dūd*) in it." The sultan gave orders for the *amīr*s to break it. They refused and he ordered Ayās to take it and break it. Then, a worm came out from within it. Then, out of envy, the *amīr*s said to him: "You fool, for what reason did you break this jewel?" He said: "I did not break a jewel, but a stone, but you have broken the real jewel, namely the ruler's word [by not obeying him]." Maḥmūd was pleased with what he said and increased his daily food allowance by two loaves of bread.

Then, a horse was brought as a gift. The sultan said: "Bring in Ayās so that he can look at the horse, too." When he had looked at it, he said: "This horse has drunk cow's milk." They inquired with its [former] owner and he said: "Yes, its mother died when it was young and we raised it with cow's milk." The ruler said: "Ayās, how did you know that?" He said: "Because it walks like a cow." Then, [Maḥmūd] increased his daily food allowance by two loaves of bread.

[Maḥmūd] summoned [Ayās] thereafter and said: "Ayās, you said 'I am knowledgeable about human beings,' so shed light on my situation." He said: "I am afraid to speak." [Maḥmūd] said: "Do not be afraid." He said: "Apologies, oh my lord the sultan, you are only the son of a baker, and not the son of Sabuktikīn." Thereupon, the sultan became angry, went to his mother, and asked her: "Whose son am I?" And he said: "If you tell me the truth, then you will be safe from me and if not, then I will kill you immediately." She said: "I was married to Sabuktikīn. His semen was bad (*mafsūd*), but he did not want for anyone not from his house (*min ghayr baytihi*) to inherit his rule. I therefore employed a ruse and said 'I am pregnant.' After nine months, I took the son of a baker and said 'I have born him.'" Then, the ruler said to Ayās: "How did you know that I was a baker's son?" He said: "Because of the increase of my pay in bread." Then, [Maḥmūd] raised him in a magnificent way beyond every limit and description.[213]

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213   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ms) 197–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83–4. The parallel passage appears in Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 26ʳ–27ʳ.

Both in the version quoted here from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and the slightly longer parallel passage in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, this anecdote is narrated in such simple and pedestrian Arabic that one wonders whether it circulated orally or was an ad hoc translation from a non-Arabic, possibly Persian *Vorlage*.[214] Its distinctly Mamluk atmosphere is noteworthy: Maḥmūd of Ghazna appears here basically as a Mamluk sultan who buys slave soldiers and has them trained in a barracks. Moreover, like many Mamluk rulers, he must deal with stubborn *amīr*s who refuse to fulfill his orders. Furthermore, Maḥmūd's relationship with Ayās, which in other texts of the middle period is of a decidedly erotic character,[215] appears in this anecdote as structurally similar to that between Mamluk rulers and their court favorites. This is also indicated by the word *khāṣṣ*, which is closely related to the terms *khawāṣṣ* or *khāṣṣa* discussed above.[216]

In addition to constituting an entertaining and possibly even humorous story, this anecdote is another instructive narrative of political advice that could well be included in works of the mirrors-for-princes genre. Among other elements, by having Ayās criticize the *amīr*s' refusal to follow Maḥmūd's orders, the anecdote underlines the importance of rendering total obedience to rulers. Moreover, the story shows that rulers should support honesty and openness in the members of their court and rely on their knowledge, as is demonstrated in the example of Ayās correctly pointing out the flaws in the pearl and the horse obtained by Maḥmūd. Furthermore, the anecdote suggests that rulers should reward members of their court for telling them uncomfortable truths, as Maḥmūd did after learning from Ayās that in reality he was not the son of Sabuktikīn (r. 366–87/977–97), the founder of the Ghaznawid dynasty.

Yet there is evidence that in the specific context of al-Ghawrī's late Mamluk court, the particular significance of the anecdote lay elsewhere. As already noted, the legitimacy of Mamluk rule in this period was contested because the sultan could not claim any exalted lineage (*nasab*).[217] In this situation, the tradition about Maḥmūd's origin as a baker's son offered a valuable argument in support of Mamluk attempts to deal with the crisis of legitimacy partly caused by this lack of noble ancestry. If an exemplary, righteous, and generally revered ruler such as Maḥmūd was the son of an anonymous artisan, Mamluk rulers could also hope to achieve the same status despite their lack of noble pedigree.

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214 No specific possible *Vorlage* could be identified.
215 Cf. Rowson, Liaisons 210–1. See also Bosworth, Mahmud 90–1.
216 See section 1.2.1 above.
217 Cf. section 6.1 above. On *nasab*, see Rosenthal, Nasab.

We have evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's court indeed interpreted the anecdote in this way. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf added the following directly after the anecdote: "**What is fitting** to this *majlis*: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib— may God be pleased with him—said: 'A person's honor lies in his knowledge (*ʿilm*) and his *adab*,[218] and not in his origin (*aṣl*) and his lineage (*nasab*).'"[219] It may appear ironic that the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law ʿAlī, whose special rank in Muslim history is largely a result of his being Muḥammad's close relative, is presented here negating the significance of *nasab*. According to him, what distinguishes a person is not *nasab*, but knowledge and the combination of proper education, refinement, and good manners known as *adab*. These, however, were qualities anyone could attain, including the alleged baker's son Maḥmūd and former slave soldiers. To al-Ghawrī, the view that the honor of rulers lay primarily in their *ʿilm* and *adab* must have been particularly attractive, and he did his best to present himself as well-educated and refined.

The importance of these personal qualities in the efforts to overcome the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy also becomes clear in the only passage of the *majālis* accounts that compares Maḥmūd and al-Ghawrī, at least indirectly. In *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* this passage directly follows the anecdote about Maḥmūd's origin as a baker's son. It begins with the exclamation "Praise and glory be to God for the grace He bestowed on our lord the sultan through his knowledge of these three things"[220] and then continues with examples of how the sultan demonstrated his superior knowledge of stones, horses, and human beings. It is said that the sultan once used a so-called "snake stone" (*ḥajar al-ḥīla*) to protect people against snake bites[221] and another time he paid a low price for a horse that had been considered of no use, but later turned out to be of high value.[222] Moreover, the sultan was allegedly able, more than once, to identify spies in the army, thus underscoring his insight into human nature.[223]

The question whether or not the sultan really performed these actions is of secondary importance here. What is important is how, against the background of the anecdote quoted above, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* indicates that al-Ghawrī was superior in knowledge to Sultan Maḥmūd, who had to rely on his favorite Ayās to obtain insights into matters al-Ghawrī was well informed

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218   On this term, see section 3.1.4 above.
219   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 199; (ed. ʿAzzām) 84. See also al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134.
220   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 27ʳ.
221   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 27ʳ–27ᵛ. On snake stones, see, e.g., Kuehn, *Dragon* 181.
222   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 27ᵛ–28ʳ.
223   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 28ʳ.

about. In a political culture in which, as *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* claimed, a man's knowledge and *adab* determined his social rank, al-Ghawrī was therefore more accomplished than even a model Muslim ruler such as Maḥmūd of Ghazna.

The third group that members of al-Ghawrī's court regarded as suitable role models for their patron consisted of earlier Mamluk rulers such as sultans Baybars,[224] Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90),[225] Barqūq,[226] and Qāytbāy. Like al-Ghawrī, all of these men came to Egypt as slaves and then became first-generation rulers. Moreover, all four sultans were remembered as particularly successful and powerful rulers whose reigns marked periods of Mamluk prosperity and military strength.

The example of Sultan Qāytbāy was particularly significant to al-Ghawrī's court society, given that Qāytbāy's long reign was the last stable period the sultanate had enjoyed before al-Ghawrī finally succeeded his former master as ruler. Moreover, numerous members of al-Ghawrī's court had served under Qāytbāy. Hence, it comes as no surprise that Qāytbāy appears in all three accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as a paragon of ideal and godly rulership. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, for example, includes an account attributed to al-Ghawrī which explains that Qāytbāy's military victory against a European fleet involved divine intervention.[227] Moreover, the same text features a passage highlighting Qāytbāy's piety, as expressed by his respect for the ʿAbbasid caliphate.[228] Similarly, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* emphasizes Qāytbāy's religious qualities in its narration of how the Mamluk ruler admonished the Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīd II for not using the *basmala* at the beginning of his diplomatic missives; thus, this narration also clarified the hierarchy between the two rulers.[229] Finally, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* expounds on Qāytbāy's generosity toward pilgrims[230] and his love for "the immaculate and courteous."[231] In sum, the *majālis* accounts portray Qāytbāy as a divinely supported and morally upright ruler who kept foreign enemies at bay while exhibiting remarkable piety and kindness at home.

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224   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 73–4.
225   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 73–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 24–5.
226   E.g., Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 42ʳ–45ᵛ.
227   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 149; (ed. ʿAzzām) 57. See also Irwin, Thinking 45.
228   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 111. See also Irwin, Thinking 47.
229   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 9–10; (ed. ʿAzzām) 7–8. See also Irwin, Thinking 46.
230   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 70ᵛ.
231   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 74ʳ.

This image of Qāytbāy in the *majālis* sources is not dissimilar to that in Ibn Iyās' chronicle. There it functioned as a standard of comparison against which the performances of later rulers, including al-Ghawrī, were measured—with a uniformly negative outcome for Qāytbāy's successors.[232] It is possible that this view of al-Ghawrī as falling short of the standards Qāytbāy set was not limited to Ibn Iyās, but was even shared by members of al-Ghawrī's court society. For example, the passage mentioned above about Qāytbāy's respect for the ʿAbbasid caliphate could be interpreted to mean that al-Ghawrī's performance in this regard was inadequate.[233]

Although at times the deference of members of al-Ghawrī's court for Qāytbāy could backfire, the penultimate Mamluk sultan used techniques of literary patronage to cast himself into the role of Qāytbāy's worthy and chosen successor. In those passages of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* that according to its author go back to the sultan's own reports about his early life, it is stated that al-Ghawrī was the first *mamlūk* that Qāytbāy bought after his ascension to the sultanate.[234] This implied that al-Ghawrī was, in a sense, the Mamluk equivalent of a European first-born prince born in purple. Although as far as we know the Mamluk political system did not assign a greater right to rule to the first-purchased military slaves of a ruler, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and most probably also other members of the court including the sultan viewed al-Ghawrī's status as Qāytbāy's first sultanic slave as an important element supporting the legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's rule. This becomes clear from the fact that directly after the section on Qāytbāy's purchase of al-Ghawrī, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* continues with a passage on a succession conflict in the Ottoman Sultanate; at first glance this appears to be totally out of context, but indeed it is closely connected to the notion that al-Ghawrī's status as Qāytbāy's first slave bought in office was of considerable significance. The passage narrates a debate between the future Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīd II and his brother Cem about which of the two is more qualified to succeed their father as Ottoman ruler. When Cem advances the argument that he is older and thus more entitled to rule, Bāyezīd points out that he was born during their father's tenure as sultan. Therefore, even though Cem was older, Bāyezīd claimed to be more distinguished and hence more qualified for the sultanate.[235] Mutatis mutandis, this story implied that while Qāytbāy might have acquired *mamlūk*s as an *amīr*, and they had served him longer, al-Ghawrī was exalted over all others by being

232   Cf. section 2.2.1 above.
233   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 111.
234   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 64ᵛ–65ʳ.
235   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 65ʳ.

Qāytbāy's oldest sultanic slave. Although not stated in the source, al-Ghawrī was implicitly likened to Bāyezīd who, as late Mamluk audiences knew very well, had triumphed over his older brother Cem and attained the Ottoman sultanate during Qāytbāy's reign.

Other passages in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* likewise employ the figure of Qāytbāy to buttress the legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's rule. Among other elements, the text states that Qāytbāy had explicitly decreed in his will that his son Muḥammad should not succeed him as sultan.[236] More explicit, however, is the following passage which indicates that al-Ghawrī had always been Qāytbāy's first choice as successor:

> The [now] deceased Sultan Qāytbāy had pointed to [al-Ghawrī's]—may his victory be glorious—ascension [in several ways]. Among them is that when [al-Ghawrī]—may his victory be glorious—traveled to the Hijaz, [Qāytbāy] decreed that he should improve his handwriting (*tajwīd al-khaṭṭ*). This pointed in reality to the sultanate, because one can become sultan only when one can write one's formal signature (*ʿalāma*).
>
> Among [the ways in which Qāytbāy had pointed al-Ghawrī's ascension] is that the *amīr* Ṭuqṭbāy, the commander of the citadel said: "I stood next to the [now] deceased sultan [Qāytbāy] and heard him say: 'I raised him and there is only him in this place (*lā khalāhu fī hādhihi l-balad*).' He did not mention anyone's name, so I said: 'My lord the sultan, to whom do you refer?' He said: 'To Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.'" These signs are sufficient.[237]

By including this and the above mentioned passages, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* made clear statements about al-Ghawrī and his former master Qāytbāy: The latter was not only a paragon of ideal rulership, he also wished al-Ghawrī—and not his son Muḥammad—to be his successor. Regardless of whether this was in line with Qāytbāy's wishes for the time after his death, it entailed a strong communicative message about al-Ghawrī and the legitimacy of his status.

We can conclude that exemplary rulers of the past fulfilled at least three functions for al-Ghawrī's legitimation activities: First, they offered models of ideal rulership and provided lessons on commendable political conduct that al-Ghawrī and those around him could follow. Second, the mere fact that al-Ghawrī and members of his *majālis* paid, according to our sources, attention to their example can be understood as a legitimating practice, as it indicated

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236 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 90ʳ.

237 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 109ʳ.

that the sultan and his intimates cared about concepts of ideal Islamic governance.[238] Third and most importantly, the sultan and those around him used various discursive and symbolic means—including the modification of the ruler's physical appearance—to integrate al-Ghawrī into a tradition of righteous and legitimate universal authority represented by the earlier rulers discussed. This finding confirms that late Mamluk rule rather closely adheres to the Weberian ideal type of traditional authority.

6.2.2   *Al-Ghawrī and the Mainstays of Sultanic Rulership*

Ruling basically as the first among the highest-ranking *amīr*s of the realm who were often their equals in origin, upbringing, and record of service,[239] Mamluk rulers sought to set themselves apart from other members of the military elite by claiming special qualities to legitimize their ascension to the sultanate and their continued exercise of its prerogatives.

In the preceding chapters, we have analyzed several strategies through which al-Ghawrī and the members of his court sought to endow the sultan's rule with legitimacy. Among other elements, they cast him in the roles of protector of the *sunna*, custodian of the holy cities, *mujaddid* of his time, and as part of an earlier tradition of ideal Muslim rulership. Moreover, they aimed at representing the sultan as a paragon of religious knowledge, wisdom, and generosity. The fact that these religiously significant qualities received such ample attention supports Nabil Al-Tikriti's conclusion that the Islamicate political culture of the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries was marked by a "tendency toward spiritual legitimation of sovereignty."[240] This went hand in hand with a heightened interest in requiring aspirants to positions of political leadership to be "intellectually and ethically prepared to assume the role of an ideal […] Islamic ruler."[241] Similarly, Christopher Markiewicz notes that "lines distinguishing sovereign and saint were frequently blurred."[242]

As seen above, al-Ghawrī and his court did their best to demonstrate to themselves and others that the penultimate Mamluk sultan fulfilled these expectations. Yet, in addition to these intellectual and religious virtues, other qualities also mattered in the political culture of the early tenth/sixteenth cen-

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238   For a similar argument, see Marlow, Advice.
239   Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 237; Northrup, Sultanate 254–5. See also Levanoni, Conception 374; Murphey, *Sovereignty* 34; Sievert, Kampf 336; Sievert, Family 115; Meloy, Privatization 196; Newhall, *Patronage* 26.
240   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 3.
241   Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 4.
242   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 12.

tury and the Mamluk court's efforts to construct a shared vision of good governance. Among these qualities, four deserve special attention here, given their prominence in our sources as mainstays of sultanic rulership: noble pedigree, divine ordainment, justice, and military prowess.

6.2.2.1 Noble Pedigree

From a transregional perspective in particular, al-Ghawrī's apparent lack of a noble ancestry was a major weak point in his bid for legitimacy. While other Mamluk rulers, such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn or al-Ghawrī's indirect predecessor Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy, could trace their origin back to at least one forefather who had ruled as sultan, al-Ghawrī came to Egypt not only as non-Muslim slave, but also as the son of an ordinary, unknown person, as the absence of a meaningful *nasab* component in his name demonstrates.[243]

There is evidence that the members of al-Ghawrī's court were well aware that the lack of a noble pedigree constituted a significant liability for their ruler, particularly in relation to audiences outside the Mamluk Sultanate. This is clearly apparent from a story included in both *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and—in a slightly longer form—in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. In the former source, its beginning reads:

> **Wise saying (ḥikma):** Our lord the sultan said: "The *ḥājib* Jānibak went to the land of the Ottomans as an envoy. It was said to him: 'Who are you (pl.) that you rule over the inviolable house of God [that is, the Kaʿba], you children of unbelievers (*awlād al-kuffār*)? This authority befits our sultan who is a sultan, son of a sultan, and grandson of a sultan (*sulṭān ibn sulṭān ibn sulṭān*).'"[244]

This anecdote, with its outright challenge to Mamluk legitimacy in general and suzerainty over the sanctuaries of the Hijaz in particular, appears in two independent sources originating from the late Mamluk court. This suggests that it reflected a real threat to the Mamluk ruling elite, namely, that other Muslim rulers, such as the Ottomans, had superior claims in terms of genealogical legitimation, and that these claims were evidently important to Mamluk audiences. It is a testimony to the vibrant cultural and intellectual life of al-Ghawrī's court that its members came up with at least three different strategies to fend off such

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243   Cf. section 1.1 above. On the significance of ancestry among members of al-Ghawrī's court, see also Mauder, Persian 392–3.

244   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 257–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 133–4. The parallel passage appears in Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 31ʳ–31ᵛ. See also Irwin, Thinking 46.

attacks on Mamluk legitimacy: (1) the outright negation of the importance of noble ancestry, (2) the establishment of a kind of surrogate lineage of the Mamluk ruler to connect him to earlier rulers, and (3) the attempt to provide the sultan with a noble pedigree in the narrower sense of the word.

(1) In our study of the image of Maḥmūd of Ghazna at al-Ghawrī's court, we saw how arguments denying the importance of an exalted genealogy were presented in this context. Members of al-Ghawrī's court argued that even a person of lowly origin—such as the son of an anonymous artisan—could become a widely acclaimed representative of ideal rulership.[245] Moreover, the above-quoted aphorism attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib indicated that honor lay not in one's origin, but was based on knowledge, education, and good manners.[246]

Both of these arguments also appear, at least in a similar form, in the second part of the anecdote of *ḥājib* Jānibak's encounter with the Ottomans:

> Jānibak replied to them: "When the trumpet is blown, the ties of kinship (*ansāb*) between them will be as nothing [Q 23:101].[247] Who was the father of our lord Abraham and who was the father of Muḥammad—peace be upon them? Moreover, it is said that a person's honor lies in his knowledge and his *adab*, and not in his origin and his lineage." *Shaykh* Kūrānī[248] said: "Do not speak ill about the legitimacy (*lā takallamū fī ḥaqq*)[249] of the sultans of Egypt, you disgrace [only] yourselves." Sultan Bāyezīd was pleased with what [Jānibak] had said and bestowed many favors upon him.[250]

The historical background of this anecdote was an embassy that Qāytbāy sent to his Ottoman peer Bāyezīd II during the first Mamluk-Ottoman war. Cihan Yüksel Muslu recently studied this mission in detail and therefore its historical circumstances need not detain us here.[251] However, in the present context, the three Mamluk counterarguments formulated in the anecdote are important.

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245   On Maḥmūd's alleged lowly origin, see Meisami, Rulers 87.

246   Cf. section 6.2.1 above. On this kind of aphorism, see Savant and de Felipe, Introduction 1–2.

247   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

248   On this Ottoman scholar, see Muslu, *Ottomans* 111, 134–5, 140, 147; Muslu, Patterns 404–10, here esp. 407–8.

249   Here I follow Ullmann, *Wörterbuch* i, 330.

250   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134. The parallel passage appears in Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 31ᵛ. See also Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 214–5; Irwin, Thinking 46. The latter publication erroneously considers *shaykh* Kūrānī part of Jānibak's delegation.

251   Muslu, *Ottomans* 1–2, 134–41.

Jānibak's last argument in the anecdote is already familiar to us: It is the saying attributed elsewhere to ʿAlī about the significance of knowledge and lineage. Apparently, this aphorism enjoyed a certain popularity at al-Ghawrī's court: it appears twice in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and also features in the mirror-for-princes *Ādāb al-mulūk* copied or compiled for al-Ghawrī by one of his slave soldiers.[252]

In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Sharīf takes up the notion that knowledge justifies political rule in a short passage directly following the anecdote translated above. This passage narrates how an Ottoman commander taken captive in the first Mamluk-Ottoman war was found to be so ignorant of the basics of Islamic law that he was taught together with the young barracked *mamlūk* recruits.[253] As Muslu observed, the arrangement of these two textual units indicates that al-Sharīf sought to respond to Ottoman claims for suzerainty over the Hijaz by pointing out that the Ottoman ruling elite lacked the knowledge necessary for such a position.[254]

The second argument that Jānibak brings forth follows the already familiar strategy of pointing to revered figures of the past who, like the Mamluk rulers, lacked a noble ancestry. While in the material reviewed above, Maḥmūd of Ghazna served as a case in point, here the argument is brought to a new level by adducing the examples of the prophets Abraham and Muḥammad who both lacked a famous ancestry. By pointing to these two prophets, Jānibak "underscored the insignificance of pedigree in spiritual or ideological leadership [...] [and] skillfully emphasized the weaknesses of dynastic regimes,"[255] as Muslu argued. He also linked the debates about legitimate political leadership to one of the most contested issues in religious thought during the late middle period, namely the status of the Prophet Muḥammad's parents. For many Muslims, it was hard to believe that the Prophet's parents could be punished in hell as unbelievers; others strongly rejected the notion that his parents could be saved merely because they were the Prophet's relatives.[256] The following widely accepted *ḥadīth* from Abū Dāwūd's collection played a central role in these debates: "A man said: 'Oh Messenger of God, where is my father?' [The Messenger of God] said: 'Your father is in hell.' When [the man] turned his back, [the Messenger of God] said: 'My father and your father are in hell.'"[257]

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252 Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fol. 5ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 6.
253 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134.
254 Muslu, *Ottomans* 153, 174.
255 Muslu, *Ottomans* 135.
256 Cf. Katz, *Birth* 125–6.
257 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, no. 4718. On this tradition, see also Dreher, Une polémique 302–3.

Similar traditions, though more ambiguous, circulated about the Prophet's mother. Consequently, some of the most prominent scholars, including, for example, Abū Ḥanīfa, taught that the Prophet's parents were both damned.[258] Hence, Jānibak's statement that Abraham's and Muḥammad's fathers had been unbelievers like the ancestors of most *mamlūk*s—he is depicted in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* as posing the rhetorical question "Were their fathers Muslims or not?"[259]—not only emphasized that a man's status did not depend on that of his father, but also demonstrated that Jānibak, as the spokesperson of the Mamluk military elite, knew enough about Islamic salvation history to make this statement and thereby endorse the standard view of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, to which both Mamluks and Ottomans belonged. Here, Jānibak, as the Mamluk representative, displayed precisely the kind of *ʿilm* that according to the argument previously discussed, justified political rule.

In addition to these two arguments, which are not new to us, the anecdote also included a third point to clarify why noble pedigree was irrelevant. By citing the Quranic verse "When the trumpet is blown, the ties of kinship (*ansāb*) between them will be as nothing" at the beginning of his reply, Jānibak pointed to the Islamic notion that on judgment day, all references to one's ancestry will come to naught. Rather than building claims for legitimacy on fleeting arguments like kinship, rulers should strive for qualities that would benefit them in the hereafter, such as religious knowledge.[260]

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya indicates that these arguments convinced the Ottoman scholarly elite—represented here by *shaykh* Kūrānī—and the Ottoman sultan. Regardless of whether we understand this as a literary strategy to reinforce these arguments or as a reflection of Jānibak's experiences in the Ottoman realm, the anecdote demonstrates that the Mamluk elite came up with strategies to defend themselves against attacks directed at their lack of a noble pedigree.

(2) Despite these arguments, being part of a tradition of rule apparently mattered for members of al-Ghawrī's court. We have seen above how some sought to present al-Ghawrī as a worthy successor of earlier paragons of ideal rulership, such as Alexander the Great, Maḥmūd of Ghazna, or al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāytbāy, and there is no need to reiterate our findings here.[261] It is

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258   Katz, *Birth* 126. Al-Suyūṭī argued that the Prophet's parents were saved, cf. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī* ii, 191–221; al-Dāwūdī, *Tarjamat al-ʿallāma al-Suyūṭī*, fols. 105ʳ–125ʳ. See, in general, Adang, Islam 396; Dreher, Une polémique.

259   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 31ᵛ.

260   On this verse in the context of genealogical thought, see also Khalidi, *Thought* 49–50.

261   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.

noteworthy, however, that al-Ghawrī and his court apparently did not seek to establish a link to the Ayyubid dynasty. Earlier generations of Mamluk rulers had employed various discursive and performative means to present themselves as the Ayyubids' rightful successors.[262] Notwithstanding the survival of certain originally Ayyubid, but in al-Ghawrī's time thoroughly "Mamlukized" forms of court ceremonial,[263] similarly explicit references to the Ayyubids are notably absent in what we know about Mamluk court culture under the penultimate Mamluk ruler. There are at least two possible explanations for this. First, more than a quarter of a millennium stood between al-Ghawrī's reign and the Ayyubids, whose rule in the early tenth/sixteenth century was a distant memory. Moreover, unlike his earlier peers, al-Ghawrī was not directly connected to an Ayyubid household—be it as a former Ayyubid slave or as the client or son of a former Ayyubid slave—therefore, any attempts to present him as a successor to the Ayyubids would have been potentially more difficult.

(3) A particularly noteworthy strategy to overcome al-Ghawrī's lack of noble pedigree included attempts to prove that the ruler was, in fact, biologically related to famous political leaders.[264] The sources bear witness to two such attempts to trace al-Ghawrī's lineage back to noble forefathers. In an earlier chapter, we examined a genealogy included in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* according to which al-Ghawrī—like all Circassians—was a descendant of the Prophet Joseph's brothers. This genealogy provided al-Ghawrī with one of the noblest pedigrees possible in an Islamic worldview, as it made him a descendant of the Prophet Jacob. Moreover, the claim that al-Ghawrī was a distant grandnephew of the Quranic Joseph, who had once governed Egypt, also boosted the legitimacy of the sultan's rule over the country, which according to this line of reasoning, was his rightful inheritance.[265]

Moreover, both *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* bear witness to a second genealogy circulating at al-Ghawrī's court, one that linked the Circassians in general and the sultan in particular to an ancient group of

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262   Cf. Aigle, Legitimizing 222–3. See also Holt, Position 241, 243–5; van Steenbergen, Ritual, esp. 242–3; Northrup, *Slave* 163–5; Kühn, *Söhne, passim*.

263   See section 6.3.3 below.

264   On the legitimating function of—real and imagined—genealogies in pre- and early modern Europe, see, e.g., Spiegel, Genealogy; Rothstein, Etymology; Tanner, *Descendant*, esp. 52–118; Brandt, Köhler, and Siewert (eds.), *Bewusstsein*; in early Islam, see Donner, *Narratives* 104–11; and in Mamluk society, see Yosef, Term 15–7; on their importance in Islamicate societies in general, see Savant and de Felipe, Introduction 1–4; on what the author calls "forged" genealogies, see Szombathy, Motives; and on genealogy and migration narratives, see Renger and Toral-Niehoff (eds.), *Genealogie*.

265   Cf. section 4.2.4 above.

Arab rulers. *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* features this second origin narrative directly after the story about Joseph's brothers as the Circassians' forefathers. It reads:

> It is also said that the Circassians originate from the Arabs of the Banū
> Ghassān. It is said that one of the leaders (*amīr min umarāʾ*) of the Banū
> Ghassān called Kas came and converted to Islam in the time of ʿUmar
> b. al-Khaṭṭāb['s caliphate]—may God be pleased with him. When [Kas]
> entered Medina, ʿUmar said to him: "Do you want to enter the inviolable
> house of God and see these great sights?" Then, when [Kas] had begun
> to make the circumambulation [around the Kaʿba] and was walking, sud-
> denly a man of the Fazāra[266] tribe trod on the hem of his pilgrim dress.
> [Kas] hit the face of the Fazārī and gouged his eye out. The Fazārī went
> away and complained to ʿUmar about him. ʿUmar said: "Get me Kas!" He
> was brought to him and ʿUmar said: "What is this, Kas?" [Kas] said: "If it
> were not for the shame it would have brought you, I would have killed
> him!" Then ʿUmar said: "Provide retaliation to your opponent, as it has
> been transmitted 'an eye for an eye.'" [Kas] said: "I am a ruler (*malik*) and
> he belongs to the rabble." ʿUmar said to him: "Islam has made you two
> equals, there is no difference between a slave and noble people." Then
> [Kas] said: "Grant me a respite of one night so that I provide retaliation
> to him tomorrow." That night he met with a group, fled toward Syria, and
> converted back to Christianity. Then, he became afraid of an attack by
> ʿUmar and fled to the Byzantines. Heraclius allocated him land for set-
> tlement in the north. The Circassians (Jarkas) belong to his offspring
> because ʿUmar was told "Kas has left" (*sāra Kas*). They thus belong ori-
> ginally to the Banū Ghassān.[267]

The version of the story in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* where it is attributed to al-Ghawrī exhibits several noteworthy differences. Here, Kas converted to Islam together with the entire tribal group of the Banū Ghassān whom he led as their "sultan." Moreover, Kas' adversary is not identified as member of a particular tribe, but is merely referred to as a poor man. The most important discrepancy, however, is that Kas not only injures, but kills his opponent, whose relatives thereupon demand to enforce the *lex talionis*. In *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the story of Kas' flight to the territory of the Byzantines—the old allies and

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266   On the Fazārī character, see Bray, King 182–3, 187, 195.
267   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 34ᵛ–35ʳ.

overlords of the Ghassanids—parallels that in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* but does not refer to Kas converting back to Christianity.[268]

Despite these differences, both versions seem to be based on the same basic narrative, which ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām identified in his partial edition of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as the story of Jabala b. al-Ayham, the last ruler of the Ghassanids.[269] In the Mamluk period, prominent sources, such as, for example, Ibn Kathīr's chronicle *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, narrate this story in recensions close to and in part verbatim overlapping the version in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*.[270] There are two main differences between the versions in Ibn Kathīr and earlier works[271] on the one hand and the pertinent passages from the *majālis* works on the other hand: the latter texts call the main Ghassanid character Kas[272] instead of Jabala and they explicitly identify him as the progenitor of the Circassians.

As Irfan Shahî showed, the connection between the Circassians and the Ghassanids outlined in Mamluk sources indeed reflects earlier historical experiences. After the victory of Muslim forces over a Byzantine army in the battle of Yarmūk in 15/636, some members of the Ghassanids relocated from greater Syria to Byzantine-ruled Anatolia. Possibly in reaction to the crusader's conquest of Constantinople in 600/1204, their descendants later relocated to the Caucasus, where they mingled with Circassian tribes.[273] Hence, in the tenth/sixteenth century, many Circassians could indeed rightfully claim to have Ghassanid blood in their veins.

This historical background notwithstanding, we may ask what the courtly elite of al-Ghawrī's time gained by presenting the last Ghassanid king as the progenitor of the sultan's ethnic group. First, the story provided al-Ghawrī and his fellow Circassians with a noble Arab lineage. After all, the Ghassanids were, together with the Lakhmids, remembered in the Islamic middle period as the Arab group who had established a powerful polity in the period immediately

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268 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 200; (ed. ʿAzzām) 85. See also Irwin, Thinking 44; Irwin, Circassian 115–6; Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 219; Frenkel, Nations 62–3.

269 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (ed. ʿAzzām) 85.

270 See, e.g., Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* xi, 53; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vi.2, 66. See also Hathaway, Lineage, 100–1; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 194–5; Irwin, Circassian 115; Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn* 74.

271 Studies of the early material include Bray, King; Bray, Damnation. See also Shahîd, Ghassān Post Ghassān 324–5.

272 This name seems to come from Circassian lore, cf. Hathaway, Lineage 101; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 187–8.

273 Shahîd, Ghassān Post Ghassān 323–8. See also Hathaway, Lineage 100.

preceding the rise of Islam.[274] As Julia Bray noted, Jabala b. al-Ayham had a reputation "as the last Arab king"[275] and as "a pattern of the pre-Islamic aristocratic Arab virtues."[276] Hence, Jabala and his fellow Ghassanid kings were quite similar to other famous earlier rulers to whom our sources link al-Ghawrī, albeit with the important difference that in the Ghassanid case, this link was understood as a blood relation.

Second, by tracing al-Ghawrī's origin back to the Ghassanid Kas, the sultan and those around him could claim that the forefather of the Circassians had become a Muslim shortly after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. Hence, instead of being "children of unbelievers" as Jānibak's Ottoman opponents accused them of in the anecdote analyzed above, al-Ghawrī and his fellow Circassian members of the Mamluk military elite could produce at least one famous early Muslim in their pedigree.

Third, the Kas story integrated the Circassians into a broader framework of Islamic history. Instead of being a little-known pagan people in a faraway corner of the world, the story implied that the Circassians were the offspring of a person who had interacted with the caliph ʿUmar and had performed the pilgrimage in Mecca soon after the Prophet's demise. Thus, the Circassians could trace their history back to a pivotal period of early Islamic history. Moreover, as some members of the intended audience of the story might have known, the Ghassanids were the "tribal cousins"[277] of the Anṣār, the "Helpers" who supported Muḥammad after his emigration to Medina.[278] Therefore, the story also established an indirect kinship relation between the Mamluk Circassian elite and a key early Muslim group.

Yet, these benefits came with a high price, as both versions of the narrative in the *majālis* texts portray Kas in a quite negative light. He not only behaves arrogantly toward a man of lesser social standing, but he also violates Islamic legal and religious norms by assaulting a fellow believer within the inviolable space of the Meccan sanctuary. Furthermore, Kas disobeys the caliph ʿUmar and flees—in a cowardly way—from punishment ordained by divine revelation. As if this were not enough, Kas also defects to the Byzantine enemy and, according to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, even apostatizes from Islam.

Given Kas' multifold negative qualities in this anecdote, one wonders why he appears at all in the *majālis* accounts as the Circassians' progenitor, their

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274   On the history and later image of the Ghassanids, see, e.g., Shahīd, Ghassān.
275   Bray, King 175.
276   Bray, King 176.
277   Bray, King 177.
278   Bray, King 185–6, 190.

historical connection with the Ghassanids notwithstanding. Indeed, there is evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's circle had problems with the idea that such a villain and apostate could be their patron's forefather. Directly after the two narratives that trace al-Ghawrī's lineage back to Joseph's brothers or to Kas, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* continues:

> **I [that is, the first-person narrator] say:** This statement [about Kas being the Circassians' progenitor] is to be rejected (*mardūd*) for two reasons. First, the change from a *sīn* to a *jīm* does not occur in the Arabs' speech. Second, [the Circassians] do not have an Arab appearance, neither in their figure, nor in their clothing or their complexion. Moreover, they continuously sell one another [as slaves], in contrast to the Arabs. Furthermore, [the Circassians'] inheritance of the rule over Egypt indicates that they belong to the offspring of Jacob, upon whom be peace, because Joseph, upon whom be peace, was the ruler of the districts of Egypt. No master of the districts of Egypt was of Ghassanid origin. Besides, [the Circassians'] complexion is white, and the Arabs' complexion is brown.[279]

In this section, the first-person narrator leaves no doubt that in his view, the story about the Circassians' Ghassanid origin should be discarded. In addition to etymological and physiognomic arguments, he emphasized that in contrast to Jacob's family, the Ghassanids had never governed Egypt. According to his somewhat cyclical argument, this implied that they could not be the forefathers of Egypt's current ruler.

The first-person narrator of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*'s clear statement notwithstanding, both he and al-Sharīf nevertheless decided to include the narrative about the Circassians' Ghassanid origin in their works. This not only underlines the great need for genealogical legitimation in the communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court, but also highlights the precarious character of the arguments established in relation to this need. Apparently, neither of the two mutually contradictory narratives about al-Ghawrī was entirely convincing and therefore, both were kept in circulation. Even if one of them failed to convince a given audience—as in the case with the first-person narrator of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*—it might still be of some argumentative value in other contexts.

Texts from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods show that the Circassians' Ghassanid origin narrative was indeed convincing, at least to some recipients, albeit the narrative often appeared in slightly different forms. Peter M. Holt

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279   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 35ʳ–35ᵛ.

drew attention to two literary offerings to Mamluk rulers of the early ninth/fifteenth century which likewise claimed that the Circassians were at least in part the offspring of the last Ghassanid ruler, again called "Jabala b. al-Ayham."[280] Thus, members of al-Ghawrī's court who considered their sultan a Ghassanid descendant participated in a communicative tradition of political legitimation that began a century before al-Ghawrī's reign. In the Ottoman period, this tradition developed into a new form, as Holt demonstrated in a study of a short Arabic text of unknown authorship and known under various titles,[281] including *Nisba sharīfa wa-risāla munīfa tashtamil ʿalā dhikr nasab al-Jarākisa min Quraysh* (Noble relation and useful epistle containing the mention of the lineage of the Circassians from the Quraysh)[282] or *al-Qahr al-wujūh al-ʿābisa bi-dhikr nasab al-Jarākisa min Quraysh* (Defeating scowling intentions by mentioning the lineage of the Circassians from the Quraysh).[283] The short text does precisely what its various titles promise, that is, it seeks to prove that the Circassians are of Qurashī descent. Its penultimate section, which includes a long account of the events between Jabala b. al-Ayham and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb that is very similar to the story *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* narrate about Kas, is particularly relevant here. Just as in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the Ghassanid gouges out the eye of an Arab of low social standing during the pilgrimage, apostasizes, and flees, as a Christian, together with his followers to Byzantine territory after ʿUmar ruled that his victim could retaliate, but delayed implementation of the verdict.[284] After this narrative, the text continues with an almost identical story about a Qurashī named Kisāʾ b. ʿIkrima[285] who likewise made an Arab man lose an eye and then escaped at night together with his kin, the sub-branch of the Quraysh known as Banū ʿĀmir,[286] to the Byzantines before ʿUmar could enforce the *lex talionis*. ʿUmar was thereupon informed that Kisāʾ had run away or, in Arabic, *jarā Kisāʾ*—the phrase that according to the text gave the Circassians (Jarākisa) their name.[287]

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280   Holt, Offerings 9, 11. See also Holt, Lineage 228–9; Bresc, Entrées 85; Hathaway, Nostalgia 395–6; Frenkel, Nations 62–3; Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 219.

281   Holt, Lineage. See also Holt, Offerings 14–5; and more recently Hathaway, Myths 44–7; Hathaway, Nostalgia 394–7; Hathaway, Egypt 46–7; Hathaway, Lineage.

282   Title in MS Princeton, Firestone Library, Garrett 123H.

283   Title of the 1316/1898–9 Cairo edition.

284   Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 12.

285   This name is otherwise unknown in the Arabic historiographical tradition.

286   The term Banū ʿĀmir does not refer here to the Banū ʿĀmir b. Ṣaʿṣaʿa, but according to Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 12, 23, rather to the descendants of ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Wudd al-ʿĀmirī, a Meccan Qurashī fighter in the battle of the trench, cf. al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 353.

287   Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 12–3. See also Holt, Lineage 221–2.

The text then continues with a final section summarized in its introduction as follows:

> This is the aim of this blessed work. It explains who, from among the Quraysh, took himself and went to the Byzantines in the time of Heraclius the Great of Byzantium and his son Constantine. It mentions which of them returned and went back to the districts of Islam in the days of the ʿAbbasid caliphs and after them up to the disappearance of the Kurdish dynasty of the Ayyubids and the ascension of the sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq in the year 784[/1347–8]. It mentions [Barqūq's] lineage, his noble descent, his connection with Quraysh, and his coming from [the former lands] of Byzantium to the districts of Egypt. It mentions who succeeded him from among the Circassian rulers and the sons of their rulers up to the disappearance of their dynasty in the districts of Egypt in the year 923[/1517–8] from the prophet's *hijra*.[288]

Among the contents of this section, the most relevant here is the list of the three groups who traveled to the Byzantine territories in the time of the Emperors Heraclius (r. 610–41 CE) and Constantine the Bearded (r. 20–48/641–68): the Ghassanids under Jabala b. al-Ayham, the Banū ʿĀmir under Kisāʾ b. ʿIkrima who came to settle in what was later known as Circassia, and an offshoot of the Umayyad clan.[289] The Banū ʿĀmir were the progenitors of the Circassian sultans of Egypt, including al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq and his successors.[290] The text then continues with an account of how some descendants of the Circassian sultans returned to their forefathers' homeland after the Ottoman invasion, where they begot offspring, including one Riḍwān Bey for whom the text was written and whose sultanic pedigree is discussed at length in the last pages of the work.[291] As Jane Hathaway showed, this Riḍwān Bey was probably a former *mamlūk* and military leader in Ottoman Egypt known as Riḍwān Bey Abū l-Shawārib (d. ca. 1072/1661) who sought the post of commander of the pilgrimage caravan.[292] The anonymous author must have been a contemporary of this man, although he based his work on older material, including the writings of one Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. 980/1572–3), as the text states.[293]

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288 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 4.
289 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 13–4. See also Holt, Lineage 222.
290 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 14–9. See also Holt, Lineage 222–3.
291 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 19–22. See also Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 2–3; Holt, Lineage 223–4.
292 Hathaway, Egypt 46–7. See also Hathaway, Lineage, esp. 99–100.
293 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 3, 20. See also Holt, Lineage 221.

As a former slave, Riḍwān Bey, like al-Ghawrī, must have been eager to disguise his lowly origins with a genealogy that linked him to a distinguished group from early Islamic history.[294] The solution to this problem in the communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court was still known in Ottoman times, given that *Qahr al-wujūh* repeated at length the story of the Ghassanid Jabala b. al-Ayham in its discussion of the Circassians' origins. Yet, the author of *Qahr al-wujūh* decided to furnish his Circassian dedicatee with a pedigree even nobler than the Ghassanids by identifying his ancestors as the Quraysh, that is, the Prophet Muḥammad's kin. However, to do this, he relied on the Ghassanid origin narrative: The story about the Qurashī ancestors of the Circassians included precisely the same motifs as the one about the Ghassanids, together with the gouging of the eye, ʿUmar's judgment, the culprit's flight, and a slightly more elaborate version of the etymological argument used to establish the genealogical connection. Thus, it is clear that the anonymous author of *Qahr al-wujūh* or one of its sources relied directly on the earlier Ghassanid origin narrative when developing the Qurashī version of the Circassians' genealogy.[295]

Qahr al-wujūh enjoyed considerable popularity in the Ottoman period, as demonstrated by its translation into Ottoman Turkish[296] and its printing in Cairo in the early fourteenth/late nineteenth century under the auspices of a dignitary of Circassian origin.[297] This shows that the problem of genealogical legitimacy that vexed the members of al-Ghawrī's court persisted and that the solution they had found—though not necessarily in all its details—was still meaningful and influential in the political culture of the modern period.

In sum, genealogical arguments were important in late Mamluk discourses about the legitimation of rule, either in the form of attacks on Mamluk rule that had to be countered, or as helpful tools to demonstrate that like their transregional rivals, Mamluk rulers were also connected to earlier traditions of rulership. These findings contradict the categorical statement found in earlier scholarship that the "Mamluks had no recourse to lineage in order to legitimize their rule."[298] Moreover, the strategies employed at al-Ghawrī's court to deal with the threats posed by his apparent lack of a noble ancestry show that those around the sultan made creative use of their knowledge of Islamicate history and religious thought. Their novel solutions to how Mamluk rulers could deal

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294 See also Holt, Lineage 227–30; and for a different interpretation, see Hathaway, Nostalgia 396.
295 See also Holt, Lineage 228–9.
296 Anonymous, *Neseb-i Çerākise*.
297 Anonymous, *Qahr al-wujūh* 23 (colophon of the edition).
298 Atçıl, *Scholars* 19.

with the problem of genealogical legitimation continued to make sense centuries after the Mamluk Sultanate had ceased to exist.

6.2.2.2   Divine Ordainment

Many political thinkers of the Islamicate middle period held that God chose, appointed, ordained, and supported the sultans of their time.[299] Tilman Nagel refers to this as the Sunni concept of "the election (*Erwählung*) of the sultan by God"[300] and documents its presence in central political writings of the period, including in works by Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) and al-Ṭurṭūshī, whose mirror-for-princes was quoted in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[301] Stephan Conermann, Ulrich Haarmann, and Linda Northrup proved that this notion of divine election was also prominent in the Mamluk period,[302] as is demonstrated in works of legal advice such as the one by Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333) discussed below[303] and in investiture documents for Mamluk rulers who are explicitly presented as divinely appointed and supported.[304]

The frequently used epithet "shadow of God (*ẓill Allāh*) on earth" was central in the symbolic communication of this notion. It was thought to have originated with the Prophet Muḥammad, as many sayings attributed to him featured the phrase "the *sulṭān* is the shadow of God on earth."[305] Although in the early Islamic period *sulṭān* referred to an abstract concept of "authority" rather than to an individual person,[306] the term "shadow of God on earth" was later applied to individuals, including ʿAbbasid caliphs[307] and Turkic sultans.[308]

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299   For legitimation through divine ordainment in early Islam, see Donner, *Narratives* 111–2.

300   Nagel, *Staat* ii, 84.

301   Nagel, *Staat* ii, 84, 94. On the divine election of rulers, see also, e.g., Humphreys, Legitimacy 6–7; D'hulster, Caught 191–2; Crone, *Thought* 153; Paul, History 397; Paul, *Herrschaft* 26–7; Marlow, Kings 101; Lambton, Justice 99; Lambton, Theory 49; Lambton, Quis 132, 138, 143.

302   Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 235; Northrup, *Slave* 173.

303   See section 6.2.3 below; Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 363; [part 2] 52.

304   Northrup, *Slave* 173.

305   Lingwood, *Politics* 55. This saying is not included in any of the canonical Sunni ḥadīth collections, cf. Leder, Aspekte 177. On pertinent ḥadīths, see Kister, Concepts, esp. 99; Kramers and Bosworth, Sulṭān 849; Goldziher, Sens 331–5; Mauder, Stance 89–90.

306   On this usage, see also Leder, Rule 97; Kramers and Bosworth, Sulṭān 849; Goldziher, Sens 334.

307   Aigle, Les inscriptions 61. See also Goldziher, *Studien* ii, 61–2; Drews, *Karolinger* 408; Watt, *Thought* 34; Watt, Caliph 571; Lambton, Theory 50; Afsaruddin, Caliphate 131.

308   Aigle, Les inscriptions 61. Auer, *Symbols* 4, dates this application of the title to the fifth/eleventh century. See also al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 183–4; Lambton, Justice 99, 108; Lambton, Quis 143; Crone, *Thought* 153; Karateke, Legitimizing 21. On the Mamluk use of the title,

Hence, it is not surprising that sources from al-Ghawrī's time not only refer to the sultan as God's shadow using various phrases,[309] but also engage in more refined discursive and symbolic practices of legitimating the sultan's rule as divinely ordained and supported. Since this idea is almost omnipresent in our source corpus, here we only discuss examples from three sources that are remarkably uniform in communicating the notion that al-Ghawrī's rule was God-given and divinely supported, despite their differing origin contexts and intended audiences.

Our first example comes from one of al-Ghawrī's Arabic poems, which begins as follows:

> Exalted be [He] who granted us the rule (*mulk*) over Egypt and had [it] recorded,
> Since He made it happen in accordance with God's eternal knowledge.
> The rule over Egypt is His grace and existence (*wujūd*) is His mercy.
> It is not possible for us to withstand His wrath, oh God the Clement One!
> He distinguished us and awarded us a blessing through God's favor!
> Ghawrī has achieved what he desired and continuously praises Him with laudation.[310]

These verses clearly state that God granted al-Ghawrī the rule over Egypt[311] out of His grace and in accordance with His eternal knowledge. Provided we accept the attribution of these verses to al-Ghawrī as valid, then we have here a direct statement by the sultan about himself, a statement showing that al-Ghawrī personally claimed to be invested by God, at least when communicating with the probably rather narrow intended audience of his poems, which circulated, it seems, mainly at court. If one took al-Ghawrī's claim seriously, any rebellion against him, which, to be successful had to be supported by at least some members of the courtly elite, necessarily constituted a revolt against God. If "the basis of every authority […] is a *belief*"[312] as Weber argued, it is hard to imagine a

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see, e.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vi, 58–9; Aigle, Les inscriptions 60–1; van Steenbergen, Discourse 8; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 278, 305–6.

309   E.g., Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 27; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 294; al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1; Baumgarten, Travels 370; Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 34–7; Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 193ʳ, 240ʳ, 313ᵛ.

310   Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fols. 7ᵛ–8ʳ; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fols. 76ᵛ–77ʳ; Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 116–9; Mursī (ed.), Dīwān 159.

311   Here "Egypt" is a *pars pro toto* reference to the Mamluk Sultanate.

312   Weber, *Economy* i, 263.

claim for legitimacy more closely connected to the fundamental beliefs of pre-modern Islamicate societies than the one al-Ghawrī presents in this poem.[313]

Yet, there is evidence that al-Ghawrī not only made use of the notion of divine investiture when communicating with the rather narrow audience of his Arabic poetry; *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* contains a speech allegedly delivered by al-Ghawrī directly after his investiture with the sultanate. It begins as follows:

> Praise be to the Highest Ruler who grants His rule to whom He wills and takes it away from whom He wills, [He] makes great whom He wills and humbles whom He wills, [He] prescribed rendering the pledge of allegiance (*mubāyaʿa*) to rulers and following the prophets. [...] Oh people, know that I have been afflicted by this affair without looking for it or desiring it. It has been transmitted from the Exalted One, "Obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you" [Q 4:59]. If you obey, you are rightly guided. Know that our doors are open to the oppressed. Even if they come to us in the middle of a dark night, we shall take what is due to them from those who have gained the upper hand. Praise be offered for this manifest blessing and this exalted rank, for God Most High has invested us with the command (*amr*) over this community.[314]

We should not mistake this passage, skillfully composed in rhymed prose, for a faithful reproduction of al-Ghawrī's first words as sultan. However, it does represent a view of al-Ghawrī's rule entertained by his court society. Moreover, its key motifs probably express the sultan's vision of his rule, given that the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* states that the section comprising the speech is based on the sultan's memories and communicated experiences.

Two arguments support this assumption. First, the speech agrees with Ibn Iyās' chronicle regarding the idea that al-Ghawrī did not seek to become ruler. While the chronicler presents the *amīr*s as forcing al-Ghawrī to accept his election,[315] *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* views God as the sole agent behind the sultan's installation in office: He placed al-Ghawrī in command over the Muslim community, and the latter therefore deserves—according to Q 4:59—obedience just as God and His Prophet do. Second, this claim for divine investiture was so generic in Mamluk political culture that it is entirely plausible that it was made by al-Ghawrī or on his behalf at an early point of his reign.

313　On the notion of divine appointment in late Mamluk poetry by sultans, see also Mauder, *Legitimating*.

314　Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 107ᵛ–108ʳ.

315　Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 2–4.

Our third example of a source endorsing al-Ghawrī's claim of divine appointment is much easier to localize in terms of its historical and communicative setting. It is literally set in stone at one of Cairo's most important thoroughfares. The inscriptions on al-Ghawrī's funeral complex addressed an audience as large as possible in late Mamluk Cairo and were, as physical parts of the sultan's complex, closely linked his person. The main inscription of the eastern façade of the *madrasa* begins with the Quranic verses "Truly We have opened up a path to clear triumph for you, so that God may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His grace upon you, guide you to a straight path, and help you mightily [...]"[316] (Q 48:1–3).[317] The presence of these verses on the façade of the sultan's complex was intended to establish a close relationship between its founder and God, who appears here as clearly and compellingly supporting the Mamluk ruler. In a second inscription located above the entrance portal to the mausoleum, al-Ghawrī is, among other characteristics, referred to as *al-muʾayyad*.[318] Although this honorific is not uncommon in Mamluk epigraphy, it is of special significance in the present context because of its meaning of "the one rendered victorious [by God]."[319] Al-Qalqashandī, who lists this term among the honorifics (sg. *laqab*) employed by Mamluk chancery officials, explains: "this means that God Most High supports and strengthens [the person so addressed]."[320] Together, these two elements of the inscriptions on al-Ghawrī's complex demonstrate that the sultan and those around him also clearly expressed the notion of the ruler's divine election and support vis-à-vis larger audiences.

Can al-Ghawrī's reliance on the notion of divine ordainment and assistance in legitimating his rule be interpreted as evidence that the sultan's rule approximated Weber's ideal type of charismatic authority discussed above? While the material just reviewed shows that al-Ghawrī and those around him asserted that the ruler had a special relationship with the divine—a relationship that came close to the "exceptional sanctity"[321] that Weber understood as a defining characteristic of a charismatic ruler, Weber's second crucial aspect

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316   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

317   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 134.

318   Alhamzah, *Patronage* 136; Thesaurus d' Épigraphie Islamique, no. 42881. This epithet also appears in a praise poem for al-Ghawrī penned by the *majālis* participant Ibn Farfūr (d. 911/1505), cf. al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 143; in Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 313ʳ; and in the letter edited in Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

319   Lane, *Lexicon* i, 136.

320   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 32. On the Ottoman use and interpretation of the title, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 203.

321   Weber, *Economy* i, 215.

for charismatic rule, namely, the establishment of new "normative patterns or order revealed or ordained"[322] by the charismatic ruler is clearly missing in al-Ghawrī's case. Unlike charismatic figures who claimed prophetic or messianic status and on this basis prescribed new norms of social interaction and political organization—such as, in al-Ghawrī's time, Shāh Ismāʿīl—al-Ghawrī's affirmations of his special status were firmly based on the ideological foundations of Sunni Islam at his time and did not go beyond what was acceptable in this conceptual framework, as we saw above regarding his claim for *mujaddid* status.[323] Even when claiming divine appointment, al-Ghawrī remained squarely within Weber's category of traditional authority.

Nevertheless, the claim that God had chosen al-Ghawrī as ruler of the Mamluk realm could constitute an efficient element in the sultan's communicative campaign of legitimation, especially when buttressed with conclusive evidence. A key strategy in providing at least selected audiences with such evidence involved proving that al-Ghawrī's appointment was part of God's preordained plan for humankind and thus, in the words of al-Ghawrī's poetry, "in accordance with God's eternal knowledge."[324]

Our sources do not indicate that the sultan's preordainment as ruler was discussed at al-Ghawrī's court against the background of theological notions of predestination, although this *kalām* topic per se received considerable attention in the sultan's *majālis*.[325] Rather, the sultan's court society focused on a different aspect: if al-Ghawrī's status as ruler was predetermined, then, with the right techniques, it was also possible to vaticinate it. Such predictions of al-Ghawrī's sultanic status, provided they took place before his ascension, could serve as powerful confirmations of the legitimacy of his rule.

Our sources indicate that members of the sultan's court were deeply interested in everything that could be interpreted—in hindsight—as a prediction of al-Ghawrī's rise to the sultanate. Two ways of gaining information about the future deserve special attention here: dreams and astrological computations.[326]

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322 Weber, *Economy* i, 215.

323 Cf. section 5.2.4 above.

324 Al-Ghawrī, *al-Qaṣāyid al-rabbāniyya*, fol. 7ᵛ; Anonymous, *Majmūʿ mubārak*, fol. 76ᵛ; Yavuz and Kafes (ed.), Gavrî'nin Arapça Dîvânı 116–7; Mursī (ed.), *Dīwān* 159.

325 E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 210; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 51–2, 82, 135–6, 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 27–8, 49.

326 *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* includes passing references to three other ways of attaining knowledge about the future, namely the questioning of a man on his deathbed (Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 66ʳ), auspices (Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 95ᵛ–96ʳ), and geomancy (Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 100ᵛ–101ʳ). The science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) does not

Dreams and narratives about dreams figured prominently as instruments of legitimation in the political culture of the middle period in general and the late Mamluk period in particular.[327] In this context, Peter M. Holt spoke of "the final emergence of the dream as a form of literary political propaganda"[328] in late Mamluk times and showed how dream narratives announcing the imminent ascension of future rulers were employed in Mamluk literary offerings.[329] Since, in the post-prophetic period, dreams were one of the few ways to make direct contact with God or His Prophet,[330] they constituted a kind of "poor man's prophecy"[331] for Muslims of this time. Thus, accounts of dreams foretelling a given person's rise to rule were an especially efficient and persuasive communicative strategy—particularly since, as seen above, dreams in which one saw the Prophet were understood, necessarily, as true.[332]

Further above, we discussed a dream narrative in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in which the Prophet Muḥammad personally guaranteed al-Ghawrī's security and advised him to meet specific Sufi *shaykh*s.[333] Directly after the account of this dream, the text continues with al-Ghawrī narrating the dream another person had while he—the future ruler—was still an *amīr*:

> One day, I went to the house of the *amīr* Yashbak the *dawādār* and met there an *amīr* who said to me: "*Amīr* Qāniṣawh, I [that is, the unnamed *amīr*] saw you yesterday in a dream, wearing a big iron neckband. Then while still asleep, I brought this incident to the attention of the *amīr* Yashbak the *dawādār* and he replied to me: 'Iron [represents] power, he will attain exalted rule (*dawla*) and great power, as is indicated by "We also sent iron, with its mighty strength"' [Q 57:25]. It is inevitable that you will attain the sultanate." This incident took place thirty years ago.[334]

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figure prominently in sources from al-Ghawrī's court. While Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 83–6, discusses the qualities of the letters of the sultan's name, the text does not use them to make statements about the future. On divination in late middle and early modern Islamicate court culture, see Fleischer, Wisdom.

327 On dreams in Mamluk historiography, see Frenkel, Accounts, esp. 209.

328 Holt, Offerings 12.

329 Holt, Offerings 12–3. See also Frenkel, Accounts 212–3; Holt, Prediction. On dreams in Islamicate political culture, see, e.g., Drews, *Karolinger* 96–7; Frenkel, Accounts 212; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 69–71; Imber, Myth 21–2; Manz, *Power* 187, 190; Çıpa, *Making* 218–30.

330 Frenkel, Accounts 204, 206. See also Imber, Myth 21.

331 Ormsby, Prophecy 146.

332 Cf. section 5.1.2 above.

333 Cf. section 5.1.2 above.

334 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79–80.

This prediction of the sultan's rule through a dream dated to a time around the year 881/1476–7 when al-Ghawrī was still such an unremarkable member of the Mamluk military that any assertions of his later prominence must have seemed far-fetched. Moreover, by interpreting the dream through reference to a Quranic verse, the narrative endows it with a high level of authority. Finally, the entire story is surrounded by a certain aura of mystery because the *amīr* who originally had the dream and told al-Ghawrī about it remains unnamed.[335]

Another section of *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* underlines the epistemological status of dreams and shows that members of the late Mamluk court perceived them as trustworthy instruments by which to explore the unknown. This section deals with a debate in the sultan's *majlis* about whether it is possible to gain knowledge of *al-ghayb* (the world of the unseen), which, for Muslims of the middle period, included the future.[336] In the course of the conversation, the unnamed interlocutors argue that while some forms of acquiring insight into *al-ghayb* are the exclusive prerogatives of God and possibly His prophets, others are available to other human beings as well. Specifically, they single out observations of the celestial bodies and oneiric visions as ways through which one can attain true (*ṣaḥīḥ*) knowledge about the unseen.[337] Thus, this passage demonstrates that members of al-Ghawrī's circle believed that astrology and the study of dreams were credible ways of acquiring insights into the future.

While *Nafā'is majālis al-sulṭāniyya* includes limited, though important sections indicating that al-Ghawrī's reign was foretold in dreams, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* features an entire series of dream accounts dealing with various steps of the sultan's career. These begin with an account of a dream that al-Ghawrī had while living in Circassia in which he saw himself flying. According to the sultan, the dream was interpreted as heralding his conversion to Muḥammad's religion and his emigration to the lands of Islam.[338] A later, recurring dream in which the sultan also flew through the air was interpreted by a professional dream interpreter (*muʿabbir*) as indicating that the sultan would make the pilgrimage to Mecca. This interpretation turned out to be true when, after his sojourn in Mecca, the sultan ceased having this dream.[339]

In the next dream reported in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the sultan saw himself climbing on the roof of the Kaʿba and from there supplying food to those

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335   See also Irwin, Thinking 45, which offers a partly inaccurate summary.

336   Macdonald and Gardet, al-Ghayb 1025.

337   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS) 59–60; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79–80.

338   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 64ʳ.

339   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 69ʳ–70ᵛ.

around it.[340] Although the text does not offer an explicit interpretation of this dream, its context suggests that it should be understood as announcing the sultan's later status as custodian of the holy cities and guardian of the pilgrimage caravan.

The fourth dream account relevant here is not attributed to the sultan. It closely parallels the passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* translated above, in which an unnamed member of the Mamluk army told al-Ghawrī that he had seen him in a dream wearing an iron collar, a symbol interpreted as heralding al-Ghawrī's later rise to rule.[341] The fact that this narrative also appears in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* indicates its significance to the sultan and the members of his court as a very early and, at the same time, very clear prediction of al-Ghawrī's ascension to the sultanate.

The series of clairvoyant dreams in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* ends with the sultan retelling two dreams:

> **Pearl (*durra*):** He whose victory may be glorious [that is, al-Ghawrī] saw in a dream before he became sultan that the late Sultan Qāytbāy was on horseback with the entire army at the [campsite of] al-Raydāniyya. On the ground was a large loaf of bread. Aqbirdī tried to pick it up from the ground but could not do so. Then Qāniṣawh Khamsumiʾa came and tried to pick it up from the ground but could not do so and however much he stretched out his hand toward it, the loaf would move away from him until the entire army came and tried to pick it up from the ground but could not do so, until he, whose victory be glorious, came and picked it up from the ground as if it were the easiest thing [to do], then he distributed it among the people.
>
> **Pearl:** He whose victory may be glorious saw in a dream something like the ceremony of the day of the *mawkib*.[342] All the members of the army were present and kissed the ground in front him whose victory be glorious, apart from Miṣirbāy and al-ʿĀdil, who refused to do so.[343]

Both dreams, which mark the pinnacle of the series of dream accounts in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, clearly indicate that al-Ghawrī was destined to become ruler. They present him as engaging in the typical activities of a sultan: distributing the riches of the country to the army and receiving the homage of its

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340   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 71ʳ.
341   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 75ᵛ.
342   On this term, see section 1.2.1 above.
343   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 104ʳ–104ᵛ.

members. Moreover, the dreams single out, by name, four of al-Ghawrī's most dangerous rivals for the sultanate, people who were ultimately defeated.[344] As such, this could be understood as a divine warning indicating who might endanger al-Ghawrī's rise to rule.

The individual importance of each of these dreams notwithstanding, they acquire their full significance only as parts of a series of dreams foretelling all the important stages of al-Ghawrī's career from his early life in Circassia to his final installation as Mamluk ruler. Thus, they indicate that every major step in the sultan's life was part of a coherent whole predetermined by God. Moreover, the young pagan Qāniṣawh is presented as enjoying the favor of God, who communicates with him through dreams. In most of the dreams attributed to the sultan, he is depicted as someone set apart from his fellow human beings because of his divinely inspired foreknowledge. Thus, the series of dream accounts in *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* represents a sophisticated literary strategy through which its author proves that from an early age God chose al-Ghawrī to be the legitimate future ruler of Egypt. For the time being, it is impossible to ascertain whether this literary strategy was based on the sultan's self-legitimation strategies. At any rate, this series of dream narratives shows that al-Ghawrī's divine investiture with the sultanate was central to the justification of his exalted status, and that these narratives resonated with members of his court society and therefore found its way into works written under the sultan's patronage.

When compared with the high level of attention given to dreams foretelling al-Ghawrī's ascension to rulership, the courtly interest in astrological prediction seems to have been quite limited. Still, the two clear references to astrological methods of divination in our sources are noteworthy for what they tell us about the broader, transregional background of al-Ghawrī's claim for divine support.

The first of these references comes from an Arabic poem by al-Sharīf included at the very end of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Its first lines read:

> Oh east wind, come again in the early morning
>   to the gate of the Khusraw, the *ṣāḥib qirān*,
> His Excellency the sultan, the Commander of the Faithful,
>   Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī, the beloved of Egypt and the Khān![345]

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344   Cf. section 2.1.2.1 above.
345   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 270; (ed. ʿAzzām) 147.

Among the lofty titles applied to the sultan here, *ṣāḥib qirān* is of special interest in the present context. It also appears in the preface of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* where it is said about al-Ghawrī: "The soul of the world (*cihānun cānı*) is this *ṣāḥib ḳirān*, there can be no doubt that he is the soul of the world."[346]

What are we to make of this title, which is not listed in al-Qalqashandī's quite exhaustive list of Mamluk honorifics? Where does it come from, and what does it mean? The answers to these questions lie in the premodern Islamicate tradition of astrology. According to this intellectual tradition, the cyclical movements of the celestial bodies resulted in regular conjunctions (sg. *qirān*) of Saturn and Mars, the two of the seven known planets that appeared to circulate at the greatest distance from the Earth. Such conjunctions took place in regular intervals of 20, 240, or 960 years, depending on the method of calculation. The so-called "great conjunctions" that occurred every 960 years were understood to herald great events of global significance. People born under this most auspicious of all constellations or otherwise associated with it could hope to become the most powerful rulers and world conquerors.[347] One of these "lords of conjunction" (sg. *ṣāḥib qirān*) was the Prophet Muḥammad, whose rise was said to have been foretold by Iranian astrologers.[348]

A. Azfar Moin explains the significance of the title of *ṣāḥib qirān* as follows:

> Lord of Conjunction [...] was in its most energetic form a millennial title, which signified change in the religiopolitical order on a global scale, and, potentially, the end of the world. But, more generally, the science of astrology allowed a conjunction to have a range of meanings. [...] A conjunction could signify a lucky general, a fortunate king, a world conqueror with a lasting dispensation, a prophet with a law, a messiah, or all of the above rolled into one.[349]

In the political culture of the Islamicate world of the late middle period, the title was closely connected to Tīmūr Lang, who was widely known as Tīmūr *ṣāḥib qirān* and as such revered, inter alia, in India, where the Mughal ruler Shāh Jahān (r. 1037–68/1628–58) tried to emulate his famous forefather by styl-

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346   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 14. On these two passages, see also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109.

347   Moin, *Sovereign* 27, 29–30. On this concept up to Tīmūr Lang's time, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 166–70; Chann, Lord 93–5; Brack, Theologies 1159–68; and on the astrological details, see Borrut, Astrologers 468–9.

348   Moin, *Sovereign* 30.

349   Moin, *Sovereign* 31. On *ṣāḥib qirān* and the apocalypse, see also Fleischer, Mahdi 46–50.

ing himself as "the second *ṣāḥib qirān*."[350] Another figure generally considered a *ṣāḥib qirān* was Alexander the Great,[351] whose significance for Islamicate political culture is discussed above.[352] Yet, many other figures, especially, but not only, in the early tenth/sixteenth century, also claimed *ṣāḥib qirān* status, thereby following earlier Timurid titulatory conventions.[353] Among them, we find rivals of the Mamluks, such as Shāh Ismāʿīl[354] and the Ottoman rulers Murād II,[355] Meḥmed the Conqueror,[356] Bāyezīd II,[357] and Selīm the Grim.[358]

The early Mamluk ruler Baybars was also widely known as *ṣāḥib qirān*. He employed this title together with the honorific *Iskandar al-zamān*, discussed above, in several Syrian inscriptions commemorating his military victories against non-Muslims and his support of Islam.[359] No other Mamluk ruler except al-Ghawrī is known to have ever been referred to as *ṣāḥib qirān*. This suggests that the title of "lord of conjunction" evoked the image of Baybars to Mamluk audiences.

Thus, the application of the title of *ṣāḥib qirān* to al-Ghawrī should be understood against this dual background of communicative conventions of transregional Islamicate courtly culture and earlier Mamluk usage. By referring to al-Ghawrī as *ṣāḥib qirān*, members of the sultan's court signaled that it was possible to predict the sultan's rule through astrological calculations—although there is no firm evidence that astrologers ever performed such computations in al-Ghawrī's case. Moreover, by using this title, members of al-Ghawrī's court legitimated his claims for universal rulership. Even more important, however,

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350   Moin, *Sovereign* 23–4, 26–7. On Tīmūr as a *ṣāḥib qirān*, see also Moin, *Sovereign* 31–2, 35–6, 54; Fleischer, Authority 206; Calmard, Literature 334; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 158–9, 171; Balabanlilar, Lords 6; Chann, Lord 96–100, 107; Woods, Rise 89; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 169–70; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 357–8; Binbaş, *Networks* 251, 254–6, 258–9; and on the title in Mughal political discourse, see Balabanlilar, Lords 6–7; Chann, Lord 105–6; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 368.

351   Moin, *Sovereign* 35–6. See also Fleischer, Authority 206; Calmard, Literature 334; Binbaş, *Networks* 254–5.

352   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.

353   Cf. for this Timurid background Markiewicz, *Crisis* 46–7, 166, 171, 256.

354   Moin, *Sovereign* 90–1; Flemming, Ṣāḥib-Ḳirān 62. On the Safawid use of the title, see also Calmard, Literature 334; Chann, Lord 102–4; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 365.

355   Fleischer, Learning 159.

356   Fleischer, Wisdom 236. See also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 180.

357   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 181.

358   Fleischer, Mahdi 46–7. See also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 100, 117; Chann, Lord 100; Çıpa, *Making* 1, 11–2, 20, 160, 215, 241–3.

359   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 2189, 2190, 2246; Aigle, Legitimizing 433. See also Aigle, Les inscriptions 73–4; Troadec, Baybars 144; Chann, Lord 95; Amitai, Remarks 47–8, 50; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 357–8; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 173.

was the communicative connection that this title established between al-Ghawrī and Baybars, who appears in sources from the late Mamluk period—including texts originating from al-Ghawrī's court—as a paragon of ideal and successful rule who secured Mamluk suzerainty over Mecca and Medina.[360] The application of this title made al-Ghawrī a kind of "second Baybars," born under the same astral conjunctions as the revered warrior-sultan of old, whose inscriptions incorporating this honorific were still extant in al-Ghawrī's time.

Similarly significant, the title *ṣāḥib qirān* suggested that al-Ghawrī was, at least in cosmic terms, on a par with his most important Islamicate rivals, that is, Shāh Ismāʿīl and Sultan Selīm. Moreover, the appearance of this title in late Mamluk sources showcases their authors' familiarity with state-of-the-art political terminology that was particularly widespread in the Persianate lands.[361] Rather than constituting a culturally self-sufficient fortress of Sunni conservatism, as portrayed in earlier scholarship,[362] the late Mamluk Sultanate, and al-Ghawrī's court especially, were well integrated into the transregional communicative networks of the time. Arguably, it was precisely the fact that the title *ṣāḥib qirān* resonated with earlier traditions of Mamluk rulership and with the primarily Persianate terminology of transregional political competition that made it a useful instrument in al-Ghawrī's communicative campaign for legitimacy. As such, together with dream narratives, it became key to the court's efforts to present the sultan's reign as preordained.

6.2.2.3 Justice

Legions of primary sources and secondary studies from or dealing with Islamicate political discourse in the middle and early modern periods underscore the importance of justice (ʿadl)[363] as the standard against which every ruler's conduct is measured.[364] Cornell Fleischer thus calls justice the "common coin of Islamic political parlance."[365]

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360 Cf. section 6.2.1 above.
361 Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109, 185.
362 E.g., Haarmann, Miṣr 165.
363 On Arabic terms for "justice," see Rosenthal, Justice 93–4.
364 Cf., e.g., al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 59; Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 353–4, 368–9; [part 2] 38–9, 43; al-Ṭarsūsī, *Tuḥfat* 73; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 103–11. For secondary studies, see, e.g., Lambton, Justice; Darling, *History*; Darling, Empires; Rosenthal, Justice; Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 198–9, 211; Karateke, Legitimizing 37–8; Kister, Concepts 102–3; Mauder, Stance 86; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 128–30; Auer, *Symbols* 148–55; Lambton, *State* 118–9, 121–2, 140, 143, 149; Mikhail, *Politics* 29–33. For the Mamluk context, see, e.g., Rosenthal, *Thought* 50, 53–5; Darling, Medieval; Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim* 121–3; Darling, *History* 119–24; Rabbat, Significance 162–5; Perho, Sultan 145, 148.
365 Fleischer, Mahdi 45.

The significance of justice for Islamicate political communication notwithstanding, the level of attention that sources from al-Ghawrī's court accord to this virtue remains remarkable, especially given the sultan's reputation as an unjust ruler. Our sources approach the concept of *ʿadl* primarily from five angles: (1) as a theological theme with a focus on who is responsible for injustice, humans or the divine; (2) as a key issue related to political philosophy and wisdom; (3) as a topic of legal, practical advice; (4) as the subject of anecdotes about famous rulers of the past; and (5) as a personal ethical attribute of al-Ghawrī.

(1) *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* narrates a theological discussion among the members of al-Ghawrī's *majlis* in which they address the question whether and how God as the Creator of all things can be considered responsible for acts of injustice, in light of the Quranic verse 4:40 "He does not wrong anyone by as much as the weight of a speck of dust." In this debate, the standard Sunni doctrine prevails, according to which God's creation of both just and unjust actions does not diminish human beings' responsibility for their actions.[366] This rather isolated theological discussion emphasizes that members of al-Ghawrī's court perceived human beings—including rulers—as fully responsible for their just and unjust deeds. Hence, no one, not even rulers, could defend their unjust deeds as divinely preordained and thus beyond the realm of personal moral responsibility.

(2) Justice as a key topic of political philosophy and wisdom appears prominently in several works from al-Ghawrī's court, including especially *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, which includes about twenty textual units dealing primarily or exclusively with *ʿadl,* and the two mirrors-for-princes, *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān* and *Ādāb al-mulūk*, produced for al-Ghawrī. The former of these texts treats justice in its various forms as its main subject.

Our sources present the pertinent material mostly as short aphorisms or as more complex figures of thought, both of which they typically attribute to earlier authorities, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Among the former, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who has "[a]lways been the paradigmatic just ruler for Sunnīs,"[367] is credited with by far the largest share of material, with *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* dedicating an entire *majlis* to his justice.[368] Alexander the Great

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366   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 50. Cf. for Sunni doctrine on this question Griffel, *Theology* 193. See also Griffel, *Theology* 227–31.

367   Levi della Vida and Bonner, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb 820. See also El-Hibri, *Parable* 4, 6, 15, 77–83, 89, 96–7, 113.

368   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 211–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 96.

appears especially in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* as the most important non-Muslim expert on justice. Two sections from this work may serve as typical examples of aphorisms attributed to these two men:

> ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—may God be pleased with him—said: "The most just of the people deserves to rule over them."[369]

> Alexander said: "The dominion becomes prosperous through justice, whereas tyranny (*jawr*) lays it waste. Justice illuminates what surrounds it for one thousand parasangs, whereas injustice (*ẓulm*) casts darkness on what surrounds it for one thousand parasangs."[370]

As these examples show, the material attributed to Muslim authorities is not necessarily different from that ascribed to Alexander or other pre-Islamic figures, such as, for example, Persian kings. Indeed, apart from a few Quranic verses and *ḥadīth*s that deal with the notion of justice,[371] the pertinent material often lacks a direct connection to the fundamentals of Islam. Rather it represents a type of political philosophy that transcends narrowly defined religious identities and bears witness to universal concepts of ideal rulership.

This also becomes clear in the case of the single more complex figure of political thought on which our sources focus. This figure of thought appears three times, twice attributed to non-Muslim authorities and once to a prominent person of early Islam:

> It is said that Khusraw made the [following] statement: "There is no rule without an army, no army without money, no money without rural communities, no rural communities without protection, and no protection without justice and peace."
>
> Something more complete and of higher stylistic quality (*ablagh laf-ẓan*) with the same meaning has been transmitted from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—may God be satisfied with him and honor him. He said: "The world is a garden and the *sharīʿa* is its fence. The *sharīʿa* is an authority (*sulṭān*) that must be obeyed. Obeying [it means that] the ruler [follows] a policy (*si-yāsa*) based on it. The ruler is a protector supported by the soldiers. The soldiers are [his] helpers, to whom the ruler assigns revenue (*māl*). The

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369   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 225; (ed. ʿAzzām) 107.
370   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 162.
371   See, e.g., Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 10ᵛ–12ʳ, 12ᵛ–15ʳ, 23ʳ–23ᵛ; Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 33–45.

revenue is livelihood that the subjects accumulate. The subjects are [the people working] the arable land whom justice has made servants. Justice is the foundation upon which the world rests."[372]

It was said that Alexander had a valuable golden globe, on every side of which the philosopher Aristotle had written a political utterance. They were: This world is a garden. [Its] fence is dominion (*dawla*). Dominion is authority preserving the customary norms (*sunna*). The customary norms are the *sharīʿa* that the ruler observes. The ruler is a protector supported by the soldiers. The soldiers are [his] helpers to whom the ruler assigns revenue (*māl*). The revenue is livelihood that the subjects accumulate. The subjects are the servants of the sultan of justice. Justice is tied to the right state of the world.[373]

These three figures of thought, the first two of which are included in *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān* and the last in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* are variants of the "'closed-circuit' saying on practical justice"[374] known as the "Circle of Justice" that appears in various forms in numerous premodern Arabic texts,[375] including Mamluk works.[376] In premodern Arabic literature, it is attributed to a wide range of Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers and rulers.[377]

While the history of the Circle of Justice can be traced back to the pre-Islamic period,[378] it was in the middle period that it was often quoted in Islamized versions, such as the second and the third variant given above that include references to the *sharīʿa*, which was thus presented as "the axis of government,"[379] as Wael Hallaq noted. Yet, the inclusion of the *sharīʿa* in the Circle also indicates that the implementation of Islamic law was perceived as impossible without

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372   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 17ʳ–18ʳ.

373   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 56–7. On this version, see also Sadan, Saying 335; Darling, Medieval 8.

374   Sadan, Saying 325.

375   Sadan, Saying, collects pertinent quotations from about fifty premodern Arabic texts. See also Darling, Medieval 2–3, 5–10; Lambton, Mirrors 425; Lambton Justice 100; Leder, Aspekte 147; Rosenthal, *Thought* 80.

376   Darling, Medieval 6, 8. See also Darling, *History* 119–20, 123–4; Black, *History* 176; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 281, 304.

377   See Sadan, Saying 327, 332–4, according to whom attributions to Khusraw, Alexander, and ʿAlī are rather common.

378   Darling, *History*, analyzes the history of the Circle of Justice from ancient Mesopotamia to the modern era. See also Darling, Empires; Darling, Medieval 2.

379   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 199.

political rule, which in turn rested on executive power.[380] Therefore, not all authors of the Islamicate middle period were pleased with the place accorded to the *sharīʿa* in the Circle of Justice, given that the *sharīʿa* appeared to be of only limited significance relative to the principle of justice.[381] As Hallaq noted, in the Mamluk period such an emphasis on the importance of the ruler's justice compared to the significance of the abstract notion of the *sharīʿa* reflected the realities of the day.[382]

The presence of multiple versions of the Circle of Justice in writings from al-Ghawrī's court shows that people around the sultan were familiar with this central element of political philosophy of the Islamicate middle period. Furthermore, the specific versions of the Circle included in these texts also demonstrate that this originally non-Islamic piece of wisdom was circulating at the late Mamluk court in Islamized forms that, contrary to the conclusion of Irwin's work, cannot be easily categorized as "secular," given their overt links to Islamic concepts of law and legality.

(3) There is evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's court did not settle for such general references to Islamic legal norms when discussing the concept of justice, but also sought to provide the ruler with practical advice about their implementation. The most significant example is Muḥammad Ibn al-Aʿraj's mirror-for-princes *Taḥrīr al-sulūk fī tadbīr al-mulūk* produced for al-Ghawrī. Of the thirty-nine pages of its printed edition, twenty-five deal with the ruler's administration of justice, known as *maẓālim* jurisdiction,[383] as conceptualized, justified, and regulated by Muslim jurisprudents.[384] After explaining that the chastisement of evildoers, the implementation of punishments ordained by the Quran, the observance of the *sharīʿa*, and the holding of *maẓālim* sessions rank among a ruler's most prominent duties,[385] Ibn al-Aʿraj states that the aim of his discussion of *maẓālim* jurisdiction is to explain to the ruler and his subordinates how they can fight injustice (*ẓulm*)[386] without committing sins and contravening the "fundamentals of the religion of Islam" and "the Prophet's *sharīʿa*."[387] Thereafter the author explains in considerable detail the differences between *maẓālim* jurisdiction and the duties of a judge

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380   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 199.
381   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 199–200.
382   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 200.
383   On this term, see section 1.2.1 above.
384   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 37–61.
385   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 26–7.
386   On this term, see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 179.
387   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 37.

(*qāḍī*),[388] the necessary skills and qualifications of those involved in *maẓālim* sessions,[389] the area of competence of *maẓālim* judges,[390] the special prerogatives of *maẓālim* judges compared to regular *qāḍī*s,[391] and the peculiarities of cases in which *maẓālim* jurisdiction deals with occurrences also regulated by the *sharīʿa*.[392]

In his meticulous discussion of *maẓālim* jurisdiction, Ibn al-Aʿraj closely follows and, in large part, quotes verbatim the famous earlier work *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* (The regulations of political authority) by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058).[393] The details of al-Māwardī's teachings on *maẓālim* jurisdiction have been analyzed in great detail by earlier scholars[394] and hence need not detain us here. In the present context, it is highly significant that these centuries-old teachings about how a ruler should dispense justice in accordance with Islamic law were considered so important in al-Ghawrī's time that they warranted a detailed reiteration. This, in turn, highlights the fact that discursive communication about justice and its implementation at al-Ghawrī's court was not limited to philosophical approaches based on ethical universals, but also included reflections that were deeply grounded in Islamic notions of lawfulness and legality.

(4) Discursive deliberations, whether of philosophical or legal character, were not the only way in which members of al-Ghawrī's court society approached the topic of justice. Rather, several sources from al-Ghawrī's court, including *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya, al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya, Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān, Tadhkirat al-mulūk, Ādāb al-mulūk*, and *Mawāhib al-laṭīf fī faḍl al-maqām al-sharīf* often feature highly symbolic anecdotes about the just behavior of famous personalities of the past. Like many Islamnicate mirrors-for-princes,[395] the texts approach the theme of just rule by means of aesthetically pleasing anecdotes, making full use of the didactic method of learning by example. *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān li-faḍl ṭāʿat al-imām wa-l-ʿadl al-iḥsān* includes an example of such an anecdote that is quite typical in terms of its content, but rather unusual with regard to its main protagonist:

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388   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 37–8.
389   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 38–9.
390   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 39–46.
391   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 46–57.
392   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 57–61.
393   ʿAbd al-Munʿim, Muqaddima, in Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 14.
394   See esp. Amedroz, Jurisdiction; Nielsen, *Justice* 17–27.
395   Cf. section 3.2.4 above.

A Jew presented himself to ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān and said to him: "Oh
Commander of the Believers, a member of your courtly elite (*baʿḍ khāṣ-
ṣatika*) has treated me unjustly. Establish my right with regard to him and
let me taste, oh Commander of the Believers, the sweetness of justice."
[ʿAbd al-Malik] turned away from him. Then, [the Jew] presented him-
self a second time, but [ʿAbd al-Malik] did not help him. Then, [the Jew]
presented himself a third time and said: "Oh Commander of the Believers,
we find in the Torah which was sent down to Moses, the one to whom God
spoke (*kalīm Allāh*)—may peace be upon him: 'The ruler (*imām*) has no
share in anyone's injustice until it is brought to his attention and he learns
about it. When it is brought to his attention and he does not bring an end
to it, he shares in the injustice and the tyranny.'" When ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz[396]
[*sic*] heard this from the Jew, he became very terrified, wept heavily, and
immediately sent for the one who had treated the Jew unjustly, dismissed
him, and took what was due to the Jew from him.[397]

This story, which appears in a similar form also in Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b.
Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī's (d. after 859/1446) *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaẓraf* (The
exquisite one in every refined art) employs the figure of the Umayyad caliph
ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705)[398] to teach a lesson about rulers'
accountability to even the most lowly subjects, here represented by an anonym-
ous Jew. According to the story, rulers must be aware that God will hold them
accountable for every act of injustice that they know of, committed under their
authority. Moreover, the story indicates that rulers should follow ʿAbd al-Malik
b. Marwān's example when he deposed his unjust aide and gave his oppressed
subject what was due to him, thus providing a model of just, albeit somewhat
belated, rule. Finally, the anecdote underscores the close connection between
the justice of rulers and their fate in the afterlife. This story is clearly distinct
from purely secular political discourses; it highlights the doctrine that God will
judge rulers based on their record in office.

(5) In addition to and alongside famous rulers of old, al-Ghawrī himself
appears in sources from his court, particularly in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,
as a model of just rule. The latter work includes the following account:

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396   See al-Ibshīhī, *al-Mustaṭraf* 125. *Hidāyat al-insān* might be quoting this work here.
397   Anonymous, *Hidāyat al-insān*, fols. 18ʳ–19ᵛ.
398   This reference to ʿAbd al-Malik's brother ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d. 86/705) seems to be
       a scribal mistake. The scribe may have been confused by the fact that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Mar-
       wān's son ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99–101/717–20) was known as particularly just.

Event (*wāqiʿa*): In these days, the sultan's bulls (*thīrān*) were let out to the clover and the herdsmen of the bulls looted some of the shops [nearby]. This [looting] was a persistent custom and a deeply-rooted harmful innovation (*bidʿa*) from the time of the earlier sultans such as Baybars and Qalāwūn. When His Excellency our lord the sultan heard that they had looted [the shops], he gave orders by means of a proclamation (*bi-l-nidāʾ*) to abolish this reprehensible innovation and evil practice. He likewise gave orders by means of a proclamation that whoever had suffered damage because of these groups [of herdsmen] should come and obtain [compensation] from the *muḥtasib* Ḥājjī Barakāt.[399] [The sultan] deposited 1,000 *dīnār*s with him. Then, the shop owners wrote down everything that they had lost. It amounted to 300 *dīnār*s and they obtained [this sum] from the *muḥtasib*.

 Justice (*ʿadl*): His Excellency our lord the sultan said: "By God, had they suffered damages of 10,000 *dīnār*s, I would have given it to them."

 Disciplining (*siyāsa*):[400] He said to the group that had raised the complaint: "Why did you not kill this group of cowherds?"

 Mercy (*marḥama*): His Excellency our lord the sultan said: "If my son treated the people unjustly, I would no longer want[401] him."

 Just treatment (*inṣāf*): Then His Excellency our lord the sultan ordered that [the culprits] be crucified. Four of them were hanged and the others were publicly disgraced.[402]

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya presents al-Ghawrī as dealing with this incident, which has not been located in any other source, in precisely the way the anecdote about ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān discussed above recommends: As soon as al-Ghawrī learned about an oppressive act committed by some of his aides, he severely punishes the evildoers and generously redresses the victims, thus reestablishing the just order of affairs. Moreover, the passage depicts the sultan's justice as outdoing that of Baybars and Qalāwūn, two of his most glorious predecessors, as the latter did not bring an end to similar practices in their time.

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399 On him, see section 2.1.2.1 above.

400 Cf. Lane, *Lexicon* iv, 1465.

401 Here I follow the edition that has *ḥāja* and not the manuscript that has *jāḥa*, which is apparently a scribal error.

402 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 241–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 120–1. See also Irwin, Thinking 47, which misses the point by assuming that the herdsmen were punished because some of the sultan's bulls had been killed in the incident.

In this passage, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* uses strong, albeit not very subtle literary means to emphasize al-Ghawrī's righteousness by introducing the pertinent textual sub-units with terms such as *ʿadl, marḥama*, and *inṣāf*— lest a reader miss the point. Moreover, by letting the sultan announce that he was willing to grant an even higher compensation to the affected shopkeepers and that he would not spare even his own son if the latter had committed an act of injustice, the text very clearly drives home the point that the sultan acted as a paragon of justice and ideal rulership.

Al-Sharīf's narrative strategies align well with the image of al-Ghawrī as a just ruler, an image that several other source passages from the sultan's court also seek to convey. To quote just a few examples: in several instances in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* al-Sharīf explicitly praises al-Ghawrī for his justice[403] and depicts other members of the court doing the same.[404] Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn extols the sultan at the beginning of his work for "spreading out the carpet of justice,"[405] while the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* quotes long sections from what he presents as al-Ghawrī's "inauguration speech" in which the sultan proclaims that with his investiture, a new period of justice has arrived.[406]

Pointed slogans and pithy formulas in building inscriptions throughout the Mamluk realm likewise conveyed the notion of al-Ghawrī as an exemplary just ruler. For example, an inscription at a mosque in Upper Egypt praises al-Ghawrī for ending unjust levies from which his subjects had been suffering.[407] Moreover, epigraphic material from the sultan's funeral complex and related structures, as well as inscriptions on smaller objects of art, memorialize al-Ghawrī as "the reviver of justice (*muḥyī l-ʿadl*) in the world."[408] Epigraphic evidence proves that the sultan also used the rhetorically simpler strategy of having applied to himself the title *al-ʿādil* ("the just")[409] on the façade of at least one structure located in the city center of Cairo. Certainly, such references to a ruler's justice were common in the titles used in Mamluk political communication.[410] Nevertheless, when viewed as part of the broader communicative campaign of legitimating the sultan's rule, these rather generic epi-

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403   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 118, 143; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38, 55.

404   E.g., al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 124; (ed. ʿAzzām) 44.

405   Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 27.

406   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 108ʳ–108ᵛ.

407   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 9493.

408   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 12122; 13552; 13556; 42881. See also Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

409   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 42881. See also Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

410   For earlier examples of this and similar titles, cf. Aigle, Les inscriptions 60–1; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 19; Northrup, *Slave* 175.

graphic references to the ruler's moral qualities become significant as aspects of the sultan's program of legitimation that targeted particularly large audiences. Moreover, the epigraphic evidence suggests that even before he became Mamluk ruler, al-Ghawrī sought to present himself as fighting injustice. Two inscriptions from Aleppo dating to the years 890/1485–6 and 896/1490–1 when al-Ghawrī was chief chamberlain of the city commemorate him as "abolishing the renewed act[s] of injustice [committed] against the peasants."[411] This suggests that long before his ascension to the sultanate al-Ghawrī understood the importance of justice as a key political virtue.

The sultan and his court not only relied on written and here primarily discursive communication to highlight al-Ghawrī's efforts in establishing justice, they also symbolically manipulated spaces closely connected to court events to convey this message. As part of one of his most important construction projects, the laying out of his *maydān* beneath the Cairo Citadel,[412] the sultan erected a house (*bayt*) and a loggia (*maqʿad*) for holding trials (*muḥākamāt*).[413] As Albrecht Fuess argued, the construction of such structures in the open space of the *maydān* was most probably done to ensure that "more people could attend to witness the justice of the ruler."[414] At the same time, al-Ghawrī might have hoped that onlookers would understand these structures as physical manifestations of his desire for justice.

In addition to establishing this new space of litigation, al-Ghawrī also physically transformed the *ḥawsh* of the citadel, which was the traditional location of *maẓālim* jurisdiction in Mamluk Cairo. Earlier Mamluk rulers had dispensed justice in the *ḥawsh* seated on a wooden bench (*dikka*). In 916/1511, al-Ghawrī had this older *dikka* replaced with a magnificent marble platform (*maṣṭaba*) decorated with gold. Ibn Iyās noted: "This *maṣṭaba* was of the utmost beauty, such that nothing like it had ever been made and no ruler before [al-Ghawrī] had done this."[415] The chronicler, usually very critical of the sultan's actions, included two poems of praise about the new platform; these he wrote himself.[416] It seems that even Ibn Iyās could not escape the strong effect of this symbolic manifestation of the sultan's concern for justice.[417]

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411   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 11566; 31708.

412   See section 6.3.2 below.

413   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 56.

414   Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim* 128. See also Fuess, *Between* 157.

415   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 203.

416   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 203–4.

417   On this platform, see also Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim* 127–8; Petry, *Protectors* 155; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 46–7.

Taken together, the available material establishes that the notion of justice (ʿadl) was a key concept of discursive and symbolic political communication at al-Ghawrī's court. Discussed in considerable detail and approached from multiple angles, including theology, political philosophy, Islamic jurisprudence, and quasi-historical anecdotes, justice functioned as a common denominator of the ideal ruler. The engagement of members of the sultan's court—including, according to our sources, the ruler—with these different viewpoints should not be misunderstood as the idle musings of a detached elite revisiting centuries-old traditions of thought that did not relate to their own lives and times. Rather, by investing considerable time and effort in discussing what constituted just rule, the late Mamluk courtly elite were performing legitimating communicative practices addressing multiple audiences and signaling that the court society generally and the sultan particularly did their best to ensure that ʿadl prevailed.

Many readers familiar with the extant body of scholarship on late Mamluk history might be surprised to learn that according to our sources, al-Ghawrī and those around him cared considerably about justice and good governance. After all, al-Ghawrī appears in most of the secondary literature as an almost proverbially oppressive ruler counted among the "most […] tyrannical sultans"[418] of his time.[419] This image of al-Ghawrī as a tyrannical oppressor is mainly based on three types of source material: Ibn Iyās' chronicle, Arabic biographical dictionaries, and Ottoman Turkish works. Among these, Ibn Iyās' work has received the bulk of attention, thanks to its status as the only comprehensive Arabic chronicle on the late Mamluk history of Cairo. As discussed above, Ibn Iyās personally suffered considerably from al-Ghawrī's fiscal policies.[420] Thus, it is not surprising that Ibn Iyās' criticism of al-Ghawrī as an unjust ruler pertains almost exclusively to financial matters. Earlier chapters provided a summary of Ibn Iyās' accounts of al-Ghawrī's unjust acts.[421] Hence, here we can focus on two particularly relevant aspects: Ibn Iyās' evaluation of al-Ghawrī's attempts to represent himself as a just ruler through his attention to maẓālim jurisdiction[422] and, in his two obituaries of the sultan, the chronicler's final assessment of al-Ghawrī as a ruler and a person.

We have seen that Ibn Iyās was impressed by the splendor of the new maẓālim platform that al-Ghawrī erected within the citadel courtyard. However, with

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418   Winter, ʿUlamāʾ 31. See also Miura, *Dynamism* 111–2.
419   See also section 2.2.1 above.
420   Cf. section 2.1.1 above.
421   Cf. sections 2.1.2.1 to 2.1.2.3 above.
422   On this function of *maẓālim* jurisdiction, see also Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim*, esp. 130, 141–2;
         Fuess, Politics 98.

regard to the old bench that al-Ghawrī had removed, the chronicler also noted that "many kings had sat on it […], and its removal was painful to the people and they did not regard it as a good omen."[423] In a later passage of the chronicle dealing with the reign of al-Ghawrī's successor Ṭūmānbāy, Ibn Iyās commented in a poem on Ṭūmānbāy's removal of al-Ghawrī's platform and the reinstallation of the wooden bench: "The bench of dispensing justice has been restored and the platform of injustice has been destroyed."[424] Hence, the chronicler regarded even al-Ghawrī's actions that were intended to substantiate the sultan's claim for just rule as manifestations of his injustice.

A similar attitude is also apparent from the first of Ibn Iyās' two obituaries of al-Ghawrī, which begins with a description of the sultan's physical features as well as his good deeds and character traits (*maḥāsin*); this description covers about one and one-half pages in modern print.[425] Here, among other aspects, Ibn Iyās compliments al-Ghawrī for knowing and respecting "the ranks of the people according to their social positions"[426]—a key element of justice as conceived by premodern Islamicate authors.[427] The text continues with a much longer account of the sultan's vile actions (sg. *masāʾa*) which, according to Ibn Iyās, "outnumbered his good deeds."[428] On the following three pages, the chronicler reports the sultan's misdeeds. He returns, inter alia, to the sultan's allegedly lackluster performance in dispensing judgment: "He used to run away from dispensing justice like a young boy runs away from primary school, and the judgments that he gave did not reach a satisfactory level."[429] Except for this comment on al-Ghawrī's activities in jurisdiction, the section is characterized by the frequent repetition of select key terms. These include, in addition to generic terms such as *masāʾa*, *ẓulm*, and *maẓlima* (act of injustice) primarily words such as *māl* (possession), *mablagh* (sum [of money]), *muʿāmala* (transaction), *dhahab* (gold), *fiḍḍa* (silver), *nuḥās* (copper), *maks* (uncanonical tax or toll), *muṣādara* (confiscation), and *jāmakiyya* (pay).[430] The second, much shorter obituary is even more clear-cut in its main message. It begins as follows:

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423 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 203.

424 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 107. See also Fuess, *Ẓulm* by *Maẓālim* 128; Darling, *History* 121.

425 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 87–9. For a partial translation of this passage, see section 4.1.2.1 above.

426 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

427 Leder, Aspekte 141–2. See also Kollatz, *Inspiration* 148; Marlow, Kings 117–8; Black, *History* 114, 188; Paul, *Herrschaft* 233, 243.

428 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

429 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 91. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 249, 320; Petry, *Twilight* 170; Petry, *Underworld* 299–300; Petry, Justice 205; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 187–8.

430 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89–92.

> The first days of [al-Ghawrī's] reign commenced with confiscations, in-
> justice, and the unjust seizure of possessions. The last days of his reign
> ended with strife, sword blows, the loss of possessions and lives, horrible
> things, grotesque events, and great turmoil without end. Power belongs
> to God for all eternity, who does what He wills.[431]

Taken together, the two obituaries show that Ibn Iyās, who was directly and
negatively affected by al-Ghawrī's fiscal policy, viewed the ruler as an unjust
tyrant and criticized in particular his measures to fight the late Mamluk fin-
ancial crisis. These measures, which went beyond what was customary and
acceptable, justified accusing al-Ghawrī of injustice (*ẓulm*), the worst vice in
rulers.

Yet, the rhetoric of Ibn Iyās' second obituary suggests that al-Ghawrī's finan-
cial measures were also a key element of the chronicler's attempts to endow
the dramatic changes that he witnessed during years of 922–3/1516–7 with
a higher level of meaning. By establishing a direct relationship between the
first days of al-Ghawrī's reign, with their expropriations, and the sultan's last
days, which saw his violent end, the chronicler indicated that these events
were causally connected. Moreover, he also identified the agent effectuating
this link by referring, in the very next sentence, to God as the supreme holder
of power. Thus, Ibn Iyās perceived, or at least presented, al-Ghawrī's down-
fall as a divine punishment for the sultan's continued injustice and oppres-
sion.[432]

This interpretation tallies well with the portrayal of al-Ghawrī in Arabic
biographical literature. Al-Ghazzī's *al-Kawākib al-sāʾira* includes a passage in
which the author decries the sultan's unjust treatment of Ibn Abī Sharīf, the
famous jurist who criticized the sultan for his handling of an adultery case.[433]
Directly after narrating how the sultan punished and dishonored the eminent
scholar, al-Ghazzī adds: "The people [nevertheless] consulted Ibn Abī Sharīf
about various fields of knowledge until God removed al-Ghawrī."[434] The bio-
grapher then narrates how al-Ghawrī marched with his army to Syria, where
local inhabitants complained about the injustice of the local governors and
beseeched him for help. However, al-Ghawrī paid no heed to their grievances
and instead continued his preparations for the encounter with the Ottoman

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431   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 101–2.
432   For a similar interpretation based on a different passage in Ibn Iyās, see Darling, *History*
          121; Darling, Medieval 16–7.
433   Cf. section 4.1.2.2 above.
434   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 296.

forces.[435] After describing al-Ghawrī's defeat and death, al-Ghazzī closes his account of the sultan's life with a poem whose first verse reads "Sign[s] came to him before [his] death / but [his] craving fell victim to his hands and mouth."[436] In the remainder of the poem, al-Ghazzī censures al-Ghawrī for not helping those who pled for his assistance and indicates that al-Ghawrī met his premature death as a consequence of his hard-heartedness.[437] Like Ibn Iyās, in his biography of the sultan, al-Ghazzī thus creates a causal link between al-Ghawrī's behavior toward a revered scholar, the injustice of his subordinates, and the ruler's violent end.

Other authors are even less subtle in establishing a connection between al-Ghawrī's behavior and his downfall. In their entries on al-Ghawrī, the biographical dictionaries of Ibn al-ʿImād and al-Qaramānī include two versions of the same story, which reads in Ibn al-ʿImād:

> [Al-Ghawrī] was very greedy, unjust, and oppressive. [...] He acquired *mamlūk*s of his own and they began to treat the people unjustly, [they] became corrupt and used violence against pious people, while he closed his eyes to what they [did]. It is said that one of his *mamlūk*s bought a commodity and did not give its owner its price. [The owner] said to him: "God has sent laws." But [the *mamlūk*] hit [the owner] with a mace, fracturing his head and said: "This is the law of God!" [The owner] fell down unconscious and [the *mamlūk*] went away with the commodity, with no one able to say anything. One of the pious men raised his hands and invoked God against the soldier and his sultan, [praying for them to] vanish. Then, he said to himself: "How [can] the mighty rule of this sultan vanish, when his soldiers and might fill the earth?"
>
> Then, not much time passed before [al-Ghawrī] and Sultan Selīm, the ruler of the Ottomans, fell out with each other because of Shāh Ismāʿīl. The two of them marched against each other with great armies. They met each other at a site called Marj Dābiq one day's journey north of Aleppo [...]. Al-Ghawrī's army was defeated [...] and al-Ghawrī was lost under the horses' hoofs at Marj Dābiq.[438]

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435   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 296. For a similar account, see also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 20.

436   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 298.

437   Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 298.

438   Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114–5. The parallel passage appears in al-Qaramānī, *Akhbār al-duwal* ii, 324–5. For a similar account, see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 50.

In this story, the downfall of the Mamluk Sultanate is turned into a moralistic tale: The greed and injustice shown by al-Ghawrī and his troops and their lack of respect for God's law had reached such a level that God answered the prayer of a pious man and ended al-Ghawrī's rule. In the story, the injustice of al-Ghawrī and his underlings were thus the cause of—and the explanation for—the Ottoman victory over the Mamluk Sultanate.

These narrative efforts to present al-Ghawrī's injustice as the reason for the destruction of the Mamluk Sultanate underline again the paramount importance of justice in tenth-/sixteenth-century Islamicate traditions of political thought. For Muslim authors of this time, it was conceivable that God would eradicate the Mamluk Sultanate because its leader had committed *ẓulm*, the gravest sin in a ruler.

Furthermore, our results indicate that authors who had witnessed the downfall of the Mamluks or later learned about this dramatic event tried to make sense of it by explaining it as God's direct intervention in history, in reaction to al-Ghawrī's injustice. Hence, the focus on al-Ghawrī's injustice in the sources can be explained as part of a coping strategy that helped historians and their readers to endow the historically contingent events of the early tenth/sixteenth century with a higher level of meaning.

This interpretation fits well with the way texts written for or under the auspices of Ottoman rulers regarded the second Mamluk-Ottoman war. These texts contrast just Ottoman rule with Mamluk *ẓulm*, which, for example, found expression in the illegal seizure of estates or the levying of uncanonical taxes.[439] Although this was not always clearly stated, this criticism was a valuable means of justifying the Ottoman attack on the Mamluk Sultanate.[440]

Hence, in later sources the accusations of injustice levied against al-Ghawrī and members of his ruling elite were elements of strategies to integrate the Mamluks' downfall into a meaningful historical understanding of history and to justify the Ottoman conquest of a fellow Sunni polity. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that at least some segments of the Mamluk population perceived al-Ghawrī's rule as unjust even during his rule. For example, Ibn Iyās wrote parts of his account of al-Ghawrī's reign, in which he decried the ruler's *ẓulm*, while the latter was still in office.[441] Hence, these do not

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439   Cf. D'hulster, Caught 208–11, 233–5; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 7. See also Winter, Attitudes 201; Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 130. Also note the Ottoman promise to bring justice in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 147; and the praise of Selīm's justice in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 463; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 2, 4, 15, 17.

440   See also Muslu, Relations 67–8.

441   Cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 486.

constitute ex post facto attempts to make sense of or justify al-Ghawrī's defeat at the hand of the Ottomans.

Thus, we must explain the court's pronounced interest in the notion of justice under al-Ghawrī's reign against the background of criticism levied from people such as Ibn Iyās against the sultan's rule. It is impossible to determine how widespread this view of al-Ghawrī as unjust was in the Mamluk realm. Yet, given that Ibn Iyās based his attacks on al-Ghawrī's justice primarily on the sultan's fiscal measures that affected many, if not indeed all members of the economically active population, one must assume that a large share of al-Ghawrī's subjects potentially agreed with Ibn Iyās' view.

The sources on al-Ghawrī's rule produced during his reign belong to at least two communicative traditions that were interconnected, but conveyed contradictory images of the sultan. For the tradition best represented by Ibn Iyās' chronicle, al-Ghawrī was a tyrannical and greedy ruler who used every way possible to enrich himself at the cost of his subjects. According to this point of view, even the sultan's attempts to cast himself in the role of a just ruler who guaranteed the proper functioning of the *maẓālim* jurisdiction proved his inherent injustice.

The sultan and his court were evidently, at least to some degree, aware of this communicative strand, and did their best to refute it by presenting the ruler and his court as particularly interested in justice. Their efforts must have been at least partially motivated by the potential dangers to the legitimacy of the sultan's rule, as entailed by criticism of his conduct in office. Hence, like the late Mamluk court's heightened interest in the safety of the pilgrimage to Mecca, analyzed above, constituted a reaction to unrest in the Hijaz,[442] so too, their intensified engagement with notions of just rule represented a reaction to the crisis of Mamluk legitimacy in the early tenth/sixteenth century. Such focus on justice is typical for Weber's ideal type of traditional authority, since notions of "equity" and giving everyone their due rank among the most important values governing the actions of traditional rulers.[443]

6.2.2.4 Military Prowess

Military prowess as expressed, primarily, in the successful waging of *jihād* was of central importance for the representation, justification, and legitimation of the status of most Mamluk rulers. While it seems misguided to consider "a commitment to Islam and jihad" the only political "idealism"[444] that Mam-

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442   See section 5.2.2 above.
443   Weber, *Economy* i, 227 (also direct quotation).
444   Irwin, Thinking 37 (both quotations). For critical comments, see also Muslu, *Ottomans* 3.

luk rulers upheld, their reputation as *mujāhidūn* was undoubtedly a central part of the identity of many members of the sultanate's military elite. Al-Qalqashandī listed honorifics such as *al-ghāzī* (fighter in a military expedition),[445] *al-mujāhid* (fighter in *jihād*),[446] and *al-murābiṭ* (defined as "the one who frequents the enemy's border")[447] among the most important forms of address of distinguished members of the Mamluk military, including rulers, who indeed employed these and similar titles in various contexts, such as building inscriptions.[448] Behind these forms of address stood the widely shared conviction that the Mamluks' right to rule was primarily based on their commitment to and success in defending the Muslim community against enemies such as crusaders or Mongols.[449] Political advice literature from the Mamluk period—like similar texts from other times—reflects this idea by describing *jihād* as the duty of every Muslim ruler.[450]

Al-Ghawrī and those around him sought to situate the penultimate Mamluk sultan in this tradition of military prowess in *jihād* in order to link him to the founding figures of the sultanate who had won their political legitimacy in battle. An inscription on the façade of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex refers to the sultan with the customary titles of *al-mujāhid* and *al-murābiṭ*, but also calls him "killer of the infidels and those who associate partners with God" (*qātil al-kafara wa-l-mushrikīn*).[451] The latter title also appears on a sword produced for the sultan,[452] while a Mamluk battle standard located today in Istanbul praises al-Ghawrī's determination in *ghazwa* and *jihād*.[453] An inscription from the Damascus citadel likewise associates al-Ghawrī with *jihād* by calling him *al-mujāhidī al-murābiṭī*.[454] The *waqfiyya* of the sultan's

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445   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 21.

446   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 26.

447   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 27.

448   E.g., Aigle, Les inscriptions 62–3, 71; Northrup, *Slave* 175; Amitai-Preiss, Syria 139. See also Bosworth, Laḳab 628.

449   Northrup, *Slave* 165, 168; Fuess, Politics 96–7, 100. See also Holt, Biographies 22–3; Holt, Sultan 131–2; Holt, Position 246–7; Holt, Structure 47–8; Sievert, *Herrscherwechsel* 79–81; van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 16; Fuess, Ġazwah 271; Muslu, *Ottomans* 12; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 12, 14–5, 48.

450   A particularly well-known example is Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 360–1, 399–400; [part 2] 47–9; [part 3] 57. See also, e.g., von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 353–4; Tor, Islamisation 116.

451   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 12122. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 136.

452   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 13556.

453   Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, no. 35946.

454   Sobernheim, Inschriften 26. For similar titles, see also Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 135.

funeral complex adheres to the same communicative conventions where it refers to al-Ghawrī as "killer of the infidels and those who associate partners with God, defender of the territory of religion, protector of the blood of the Muslims."[455]

Authors of literary texts lauded the sultan's military achievements, too. The introduction of al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* includes a long passage on the sultan's triumphs over his non-Muslim enemies. In particular, al-Malaṭī mentions that, in reaction to European military activities in the far west of the Islamicate world, the sultan arrested Europeans—primarily merchants—sojourning in the Mamluk realm. Al-Malaṭī further describes how "all the kings of the Franks"[456] sent gifts and delegations to al-Ghawrī "because of their fear of his might"[457] and asked for the release of their countrymen. The author explains that al-Ghawrī, out of his generosity, granted their requests, provided certain requirements were met, although he could just as well have sent his war fleet against them. The section ends by pointing out that "among those who complied with [al-Ghawrī's conditions] and beseeched him was the greatest leader of the Franks, the Pope, the ruler of Rome […] and this was a great humiliation [for him]."[458]

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya focuses on al-Ghawrī's exploits in the first Mamluk-Ottoman war, extolling his skills as an archer[459] and stating that as a young man, he "became the sultan of bowmen in his time and their *imām* in his period."[460] The same text also mentions that al-Ghawrī was renowned throughout Anatolia for his bravery[461] and eulogizes his magnanimity toward female captives taken during a punitive expedition against unruly Bedouins.[462] In his literary offering to the sultan, Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn includes a long passage about the virtue of those who engage in *jihād*,[463] while in his mirror-for-princes, Ibn al-Aʿraj reminds the ruler of his military duties.[464] However, these last two texts do not refer to al-Ghawrī's own military exploits.

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455 Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 *q*, 7.

456 Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 3ʳ.

457 Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 3ʳ. On these events, see section 3.4 above.

458 Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 3ᵛ. Cf. for the entire passage al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fols. 2ᵛ–3ᵛ. See also Mauder, Herrschaftsbegründung 35.

459 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 69ʳ–69ᵛ.

460 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 69ʳ.

461 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 85ᵛ.

462 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 97ʳ–98ʳ.

463 Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 49–60.

464 Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 25–6.

Despite this evidence of interest in *jihād* and the sultan's own military qualities in texts produced during his reign, it is also evident that these topics were not central to any of the analyzed sources. Even in *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the sultan's military exploits do not stand out among his achievements. Besides, none of these texts explicitly labels his military activities as *jihād*. Moreover, it is noteworthy that these texts are completely silent about the sultan's naval operations against the Portuguese, which theoretically would have constituted a good example of defensive *jihād* because the Europeans had attacked Muslim pilgrims and threatened the security of Mecca and Medina. Furthermore, other key sources such as *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* are remarkably uninterested in al-Ghawrī's martial skills and exploits. Finally, traditional Mamluk honorifics such *al-mujāhid* and *al-murābiṭ* are conspicuously absent from the introductions of the literary texts produced for al-Ghawrī examined here, though these same works often include quite long lists of other sultanic titles.

How can we explain this notable disinterest in the themes of *jihād* and military prowess in authors writing about al-Ghawrī? One possible reason lies in the observation that al-Ghawrī's military exploits paled in comparison to those of his famous predecessors. During al-Ghawrī's reign, the Mamluks did not score a single decisive military victory and many authors did not view the sultan's role in the harassment of European merchants, the bloody stalemate of the first Mamluk-Ottoman war, or the suppression of Bedouin unrest as warranting special attention. Apparently, authors of al-Ghawrī's court perceived focusing on the sultan's military exploits as an unsuitable communicative strategy to remedy the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy.

Yet, there is evidence that authors connected to al-Ghawrī tried to reinterpret earlier notions of Mamluk legitimation *qua* military victory to make them more suitable to the political realities of their time. For example, the mirror-for-princes *Ādāb al-mulūk* produced for al-Ghawrī states: "The ruler should not, by himself (*bi-nafsihi*), act as a leader in war and [rather should] protect himself, since many souls depend on his soul and the well-being of his subjects lies in him being alive."[465] This statement, clad in the form of a piece of advice, could justify the sultan's continued practice of keeping himself—unlike many of his predecessors—out of all direct military engagements, at least up to his final and disastrous Syrian campaign. Through this reinterpretation of what constituted the proper behavior for rulers, al-Ghawrī's lack of military exploits could

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465   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 13ᵛ–14ʳ; Muhannā (ed.), Ādāb al-mulūk 7.

be presented not as a shortcoming, but rather as a manifestation of the sultan's prudence. Similarly, the section in *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* on military matters envisions the ruler not as a hero in battle, but as a prudent administrator of the army.[466]

A passage from *al-Kawkab al-durrī* goes one step further in reconceptualizing the Mamluk commitment to *jihād* to better suit al-Ghawrī's behavior in office. The passage begins with al-Ghawrī posing a question about a detail of legal terminology: "Is the term *muḥāl* (impossible) applied to the [legal category of] *mumtaniʿ* (prohibited) in a denotative (*ʿalā l-ḥaqīqa*) or figurative way (*ʿalā l-majāz*)?"[467] The text continues with a long reply in rhymed prose attributed to a Shāfiʿī chief judge.[468] After praise for God and His messenger, the answer commences with a glorification of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and their host, who is extolled as "the one who is determined to assist religion, who commands the *jihād* concerning the language of God according to his affections of the heart (*āmāluhu*)."[469] The following very technical reply to the sultan's original question need not detain us here.[470] However, the exceptional reference to al-Ghawrī as presiding over the *jihād* of the language of God, that is, the Arabic of the Quran, is significant. Here, an intellectual *jihād* concerned with words, details of terminology, and the linguistic peculiarities of Arabic legal jargon replaces the armed *jihād* for which Mamluk rulers were famous. This reconceptualization of a central and symbolically charged element in the Mamluk legitimation of rule is a particularly noteworthy example of the innovative ways in which members of the sultan's court reinterpreted existing notions of political communication to serve the needs of their time. By casting al-Ghawrī in the role of an intellectual *mujāhid*, his court society found a way to establish a meaningful connection between their rather peaceable ruler and a centuries-old mainstay of Mamluk sultanic rule.

In sum, we see that discursive communication about the mainstays of sultanic rulership at al-Ghawrī's court were built on time-honored notions of the ideal ruler in Islamicate society, including concepts of noble pedigree, divine preordainment, justice, and military prowess. When applying these concepts to al-Ghawrī, those around the sultan situated their ruler in the Mamluk tra-

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466   Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 157–209.

467   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 128; (ed. ʿAzzām) 41.

468   Because the exchange is not dated and several Shāfiʿī chief judges served under al-Ghawrī, it is not possible to ascertain the judge's identity.

469   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 129; (ed. ʿAzzām) 42. ʿAzzām's edition cuts what is clearly one sentence into two. On *āmāl* see Lane, *Lexicon* i, 99.

470   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 129–31; (ed. ʿAzzām) 42–4.

dition of rule that in their time dated back more than a quarter of a mil-
lennium. Hence, it is fully justified to categorize late Mamluk rulership, with
Weber, as primarily a case of traditional authority. Yet, the members of al-
Ghawrī's court did not simply repeat earlier ideas about Mamluk rulership in
their writings; they modified and reinterpreted them in at times highly innov-
ative ways to adjust them to the political realities of the early tenth/sixteenth
century.

6.2.3   *The Sultan and the Caliphate*
6.2.3.1   Introductory Remarks

> His Excellency, […] the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, the lord of rulers
> and sultans, the helper of the Muḥammadan community, the reviver
> (*muḥyī*) of the ʿAbbasid dynasty, Abū l-Fatḥ Baybars, the companion
> (*qasīm*) of the Commander of the Believers—may God Most High
> strengthen through [the sultan's] continued presence the protection of
> the caliphate, as He has already, and fulfill the hope for the endurance of
> his reign—was the ruler favored by consensus, whose manifest glorious
> feats confirmed that he was worthy of the delegation of rule and investit-
> ure.[471]

> Oh God, perpetuate the reign of the greatest sultan, the caliph (*khalīfa*) of
> everyone on Earth, […] the Commander of the Believers and caliph of the
> Muslims, al-Malik al-Ashraf, the overlord of Egypt, Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh
> al-Ghawrī.[472]

The passing of a quarter of a millennium was not all that separated these two
manifestations of communication about Mamluk rulership—the first from
Sultan Baybars' caliphal deed of investiture as preserved by al-Nuwayrī and
the second from the final sections of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. Rather, these
two textual snapshots also bear witness to two entirely different ways of con-
ceptualizing the relationship between sultanic and caliphal rule. In the first
quote, the reigning Mamluk sultan is just the companion and protector of the
caliph—albeit the most prominent one. In the second citation, the Mamluk
sultan has become the caliph and the offices of the caliphate and the sultanate
are fully merged.

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471   Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab* viii, 130.
472   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 145.

While the ideological background of the first quotation has received ample scholarly consideration, until now, the novel outlook expressed in the second passage has largely escaped attention, despite its potential significance for Islamicate political history and thought up to the fourteenth/twentieth century. The present section argues that the notion that the sultanate and the caliphate merged in the person of al-Ghawrī represented, in the Mamluk context, a novel and unprecedented development in political thought and culture. To this end, the section examines the notion in considerable detail and scrutinizes the arguments of its proponents and their opponents. Moreover, the section pays close attention to the background of this notion in earlier exponents of political and legal thought, elucidates the reasons that led to its development at al-Ghawrī's court, and explores its ramifications for later developments during the Ottoman period. Thereby, the present section not only elucidates another important reaction of al-Ghawrī's court to the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy, but also illustrates in detail the ingenuity and cultural openness displayed by those around the sultan. Moreover, it sheds light on internal dynamics and conflicts in late Mamluk court society, highlights the importance of Mamluk political and legal thought, and points to a key moment in the development of the legal institution of the caliphate, one that has thus far been overlooked in the growing body of literature on this topic.

In order to fully grasp the implications of this rupture in Mamluk political and legal thought, the section first reviews earlier theories about the relationship between the caliphate and other forms of rule from pre-Mamluk and Mamluk times and then examines the role that caliphs played in real-life Mamluk politics. This is done based on selected primary sources that mark salient developments in the political and legal thought of the period. Direct recourse to these primary sources is necessary, as much of the available secondary literature on these texts fails to give a comprehensive and sufficiently detailed account of their contents and concomitantly situate them in their historical context. After examining these earlier sources, we analyze the novel conceptualization of the relationship between sultanic and caliphal rule as presented in our main sources from al-Ghawrī's time, and finally conclude with remarks about the broader historical significance of these innovative developments.

6.2.3.2   The Caliphate in Political Theory

In what follows, we study the development of the notion of the caliphate during the middle period with a special focus on the legal question of who can become caliph, under what conditions, and in what circumstances. Moreover, it is shown how the answers Muslim authors gave to this question developed

against the background of their relations with those wielding political power. As stated above, these analytical foci make it necessary to scrutinize a limited number of key primary sources that are of direct interest for our later examination of the pertinent passages in sources originating from al-Ghawrī's court and help us to understand the latter's intellectual background.[473]

The aforementioned work, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* by the Shāfiʿī jurisprudent Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī,[474] represents one of the most influential legal texts on the political theory of the Islamicate world, also and especially during the Mamluk period.[475] Its first chapters deal with the office of the caliph—whom al-Māwardī explicitly identifies, as is customary in legal parlance, as the *imām*[476]—and the delegation of his prerogatives.[477] Following standard Sunni doctrine, at the beginning of his first chapter al-Māwardī explains that the imamate is mandatory according to revelation by referring to Q 4:59, which reads: "You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end." Thereafter, he states that an *imām* can be chosen either by election or through his predecessor's designation. To be eligible as *imām*, a man must fulfill seven conditions (*shurūṭ*): (1) moral probity (*ʿadāla*),[478] (2) knowledge (*ʿilm*) sufficient to enable independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*), (3) intact senses, such as sight and hearing, (4) physical integrity, (5) sound judgment (*raʾy*), (6) bravery to enable him to wage *jihād*, and (7) lineage (*nasab*) from the tribal group of Quraysh, in accordance with several prophetic traditions interpreted as prescribing that all *imām*s must be Qurashī.[479]

According to al-Māwardī, the required number of electors of an *imām* is subject to debate, with some scholars opining that a single person can be sufficient. The election of an *imām* is confirmed through the oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*)

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473   For a recent comprehensive overview of political thought in this period, see Hassan, *Longing* 98–141. On texts from the period not discussed in detail below, see also, e.g., Rosenthal, *Thought* 38–43, 51–67, 81–3; Lambton, *State* 143–200; Hirschler, *Historiography* 110–3; Madelung, Treatise.

474   On al-Māwardī's biography, see, e.g., Hanne, Politics 52–4; Mikhail, *Politics* 61–3.

475   On the significance of this work, see, e.g., Afsaruddin, Caliphate 131; Hanne, Politics 55; Watt, *Thought* 101, 103; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 99–100; Little, Look, esp. 1–4; Bauer, *Kultur* 315–7.

476   Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 3, 22.

477   For overviews of al-Māwardī's teachings, see, e.g., Hanne, Politics 57–65; Gibb, Theory; Rosenthal, *Thought*, *passim*; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 218–22; Mikhail, *Politics*, esp. 15–28, 40–5.

478   On the frequent mistranslation of this term as "justice," see Rosenthal, Justice 98.

479   Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 3–22.

pledged by the influential people of the community. There must never be more than one *imām* at the same time.[480]

Al-Māwardī lists ten general duties an *imām* must fulfill: (1) the protection of religion and the suppression of uncanonical innovations, (2) the enforcement of legal rulings, (3) the protection of the territory, (4) the implementation of the punishments ordained by the Quran, (5) the fortification of borders and the maintenance of garrison forces, (6) the waging of *jihād*, (7) the collection of the alms and booty taxes, (8) the allotment of allowances to those entitled to them, (9) the appointment of trustworthy officials, and (10) personal supervision of the affairs of the realm.[481]

Al-Māwardī accords the ruler the right to assign some of his rights to others, and thereby differentiates between four types of delegated authority: (1) general sovereignty (*wilāya*) over the realm as a whole, as in the case of viziers, (2) general sovereignty over a part of the realm, as was typical for provincial governors, (3) partial sovereignty over the realm as a whole, as in the case of chief judges of the Islamic lands, and (4) partial sovereignty over a part of the realm, as exemplified by provincial military chief administrators.[482]

In the second main chapter of the work, al-Māwardī differentiates between two types of vizierates, the fully-mandated vizierate (*wizārat al-tafwīḍ*) and the executive vizierate (*wizārat al-tanfīdh*). The holder of the first type of vizierate has the authority to deal with all the affairs of the realm at his own discretion, without consulting the *imām*. Since the holder of this office performs almost all of the *imām*'s functions, he must also fulfill all the requirements stipulated for the *imām*, apart from Qurashī descent. In addition, he must possess military and financial expertise. Even a fully-mandated vizier may not designate the next *imām*, nor may he depose officials appointed by the *imām*.[483]

An executive vizier only functions as a link (*wasaṭ*) between the *imām* and his subjects and therefore has no right to make independent decisions. Hence, the conditions required for a fully-mandated vizier do not apply to him and it is not even required that he be free, Muslim, or knowledgeable in Islamic law, warfare, or taxation. Moreover, while a ruler may have several executive viziers, only one can be fully mandated.[484]

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480 Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 7–11. For an early dissenting voice that is said to have argued for the legitimacy of multiple *imām*s at the same time, see al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar, *Häresiographie* 20–1. I thank Michael Cook (Princeton) for providing me with this reference.
481 Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 22–3.
482 Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 29.
483 Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 30, 33.
484 Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 34–8.

The third chapter of al-Māwardī's work is dedicated to the delegation of provincial authority to a governor (*amīr*). Al-Māwardī differentiates between governors holding general authority, vs. those with limited authority. In the first type, he further distinguishes between governorships voluntarily conferred by the *imām* (sg. *imārat al-istikfāʾ*) and seized governorships (sg. *imārat al-istīlāʾ*). Governors of the first type are chosen and invested by the *imām* to administer a certain territory in which they hold military, judicial, and financial authority. Therefore, they need to fulfill the same requirements as a fully-mandated vizier.[485]

Holders of the office of *imārat al-istīlāʾ* are defined as leaders who subjugate a territory by force, and are then appointed by the *imām* as legitimate governors. If a military leader acknowledges the status of the *imām*, obeys him, honors the unity of the Muslim community, respects religious officials, follows the rules of taxation, upholds Islamic law, and protects the religion of Islam, the *imām* must invest him as official governor and thus enable the latter's subjects to perform legal transactions. If a military leader seizes a territory but fails to fulfill these conditions, the *imām* may still invest him as official governor, although in addition, the *imām* must also appoint a deputy in the same territory to ensure that the above-listed conditions are met at a later point in time. Investing a less than qualified *amīr* is allowed if external circumstances make it impossible to fulfill the aforementioned conditions or if the appointment of an imperfect governor is necessary to protect the interests of the general populace.[486]

This treatment of the *imārat al-istīlāʾ* especially demonstrates that al-Māwardī's work was influenced by the political realities of his period, which saw the territorial disintegration of the ʿAbbasid caliphate and the Buyid takeover of rule in the very city in which the ʿAbbasids resided. In this situation, al-Māwardī's work presented many contemporaneous forms of rule as legally valid, as a fully-mandated vizierate in the case of the Buyid rulers of Iraq, or as voluntarily conferred or seized governorships in more distant parts of the Islamicate world. Nevertheless, al-Māwardī's work retains the caliphate as the supreme office of the Muslim polity, on which all other governmental offices and forms of territorial rule depend for legality. Moreover, the requirements for those eligible for the imamate, as listed by al-Māwardī, appear tailored to the needs of the ʿAbbasid dynasty, as is especially apparent in the case of the condition of Qurashī *nasab*. By upholding Qurashī descent as a necessary precondition for the imamate, al-Māwardī made it very clear that none of the non-Arab

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485   Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 40–1.

486   Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 44–6.

rulers of his time could ever attain this position. But the requirement of Qurashī descent was also broad enough to buttress ʿAbbasid claims for the caliphate, in contrast to Shiʿi theories that limited the circle of potential *imām*s to ʿAlids. Hence, we may conclude that al-Māwardī wrote his work to support the ʿAbbasid caliphs of his day in consolidating their position vis-à-vis other rulers.[487]

While numerous later authors, including al-Ghazālī,[488] upheld Qurashī descent as a necessary requirement for the caliphate, others voiced a more nuanced position. One of the earliest authors to profoundly reconsider the imamate and its necessary qualifications was the Shāfiʿī scholar Imām al-Ḥaramayn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), who might have been personally acquainted with al-Māwardī and was familiar with his work. Unlike al-Māwardī, whose *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* was written when the ʿAbbasids were reaffirming their position, al-Juwaynī's political thought gained its final form in the 460s to 470s/1070s to mid-1080s when the Turkic Seljuqs had firmly established themselves as the primary wielders of power in the ʿAbbasid heartlands. Al-Juwaynī at least indirectly owed his position at a *madrasa* founded by the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk to this dynasty.[489]

As Hugh Kennedy argued, al-Juwaynī's political work *Ghiyāth al-umam fī iltiyāth al-ẓulam* (The helper of communities in the confusion of glooms) must be understood against the background of Seljuq ambitions "to found a dynasty which would combine the caliphate and the sultanate."[490] *Ghiyāth al-umam*, which was dedicated to the Seljuq ruler of the time,[491] provided legal justification for such a project.[492]

In his work, al-Juwaynī defends the validity of the *imām*'s investiture by election in combination with the *bayʿa* as customary among Sunnis and rejects designation (*naṣṣ*) as an alternative or exclusive method of appointment. Moreover, he accepts a single caliphal elector as sufficient, provided he has the might (*shawka*) necessary for this task.[493] In discussing the conditions an *imām* must fulfill, al-Juwaynī focuses on the view that Qurashī *nasab* is necessary (*lāzim*) for an *imām* according to a prophetic tradition declaring that all *imāms* must

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487 Hanne, Politics 50, 52, 56, 67; Gibb, Theory 151–4; Rosenthal, *Thought* 28; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 223–4; Madelung, Imāma 1165.

488 Kennedy, *Caliphate* 229. See also, e.g., Kennedy, *Caliphate* 226–30; Lambton, *State* 107–29; Crone, *Thought* 237–47.

489 Kennedy, *Caliphate* 222–3.

490 Kennedy, *Caliphate* 223.

491 Hassan, *Longing* 103.

492 Kennedy, *Caliphate* 223.

493 Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 19–59. Kennedy, *Caliphate* 224, notes that al-Juwaynī might have had the Seljuq sultans in mind here.

be from Quraysh. For al-Juwaynī, the authenticity of this *ḥadīth* is uncertain and it cannot be relied on to prescribe Qurashī lineage as a necessary precondition. Hence, the only bases on which a demand for Qurashī descent could rest are the—not unequivocal—scholarly consensus and the fact that no non-Qurashī ever tried to attain the imamate.[494] Al-Juwaynī therefore concludes: "We do not see a reason why *nasab* has to be a precondition for the imamate [at all]."[495] Moreover, he states: "It is within God's grace to grant [the imamate] to whom He wills."[496]

Other necessary conditions for the imamate are much less problematic from al-Juwaynī's perspective: He must be an able-bodied man, free, of sound mind, of age, and brave.[497] Moreover, he must possess knowledge (*ʿilm*), but may consult the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) if need be. Piety (*waraʿ*) is listed, but not discussed in much detail.[498] To al-Juwaynī, the possession of "support and ability" (*al-najda wa-l-kifāya*),[499] which the *imām* needs in order to guarantee the unity of the Muslim *umma*, to raise armies, and to defend the territory of Islam is of greater interest.[500] The *imām* does not have to be sinless and while an *imām*'s renunciation of Islam or insanity justifies his removal, sinful behavior (*fisq*) does not constitute a legitimate reason for dismissal.[501]

Toward the end of his work, al-Juwaynī discusses multiple scenarios in which candidates fulfill some, but not all of the customary qualifications for the appointment as *imām*.[502] To al-Juwaynī, Qurashī lineage is the least important of all the qualifications usually listed, and if there is no qualified Qurashī candidate available, the investiture of a non-Qurashī who meets all the necessary conditions is lawful. Moreover, while the appearance of a qualified Qurashī warrants the unseating of a non-Qurashī *imām* appointed earlier, the latter's dismissal is not mandatory.[503]

The second quality al-Juwaynī is willing to waive is knowledge (*ʿilm*). Although al-Juwaynī considers *ʿilm* more important than *nasab*, he argues that this requirement can be dropped if necessary, since rulers can consult with

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494   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 62–4. On pertinent *ḥadīth*s, see Kister, Concepts 96–8; al-Suyūṭī in
        Arazi and Elʿad, al-Ināfa 247–54; van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 709–10.
495   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 64.
496   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 64.
497   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 60–2, 65.
498   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 65–8.
499   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 69.
500   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 68–9.
501   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 70–81.
502   On these sections, see also Hassan, *Longing* 103–7.
503   Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth* 225–6.

ʿulamāʾ. Moreover, if no candidate meeting the requirement of piety is available, the imamate may go to a person who drinks wine or engages in other sinful acts, provided he demonstrates his concern for the well-being of the community and his ability to defend its borders, although it is necessary to try to ameliorate his behavior.[504]

Thereafter, al-Juwaynī discusses the case of a contender who seizes the imamate by force (shawka), without proper election. If such a person is the only one who meets all the qualifications, he is automatically invested as a true imām, provided no one can act as electors. If there are people qualified as electors who refuse to appoint him although he is the only qualified candidate, the contender for the imamate may nevertheless call on the people to obey him, since an affair as important as the appointment of an imām may not be obstructed on trivial grounds. If the electors appoint him as imām, his position is, from that point on, considered justified by election.[505] In the event the person who seizes the imamate by force does not fulfill all the necessary qualifications, but has the necessary ability to remain in office and perform his worldly duties, and provided there is no other candidate fully qualified for the position of imām, he becomes eligible as imām and may invest himself with the office.[506]

Hugh Kennedy characterized al-Juwaynī's teachings as "nothing short of revolutionary."[507] By denying the necessity of Qurashī lineage and focusing on worldly power as a mandatory qualification for the imamate, al-Juwaynī implicitly argued that the Turkic rulers of his day were better qualified as imāms than the weak ʿAbbasids and should, in the final analysis, overthrow the existing political structure of the umma by taking over its leadership.[508] Unlike al-Māwardī, al-Juwaynī therefore paid special attention to situations in which no fully qualified candidate for the imamate was available. In such scenarios, al-Juwaynī was willing to waive the customary qualifications for the imamate, one after the other, and was even ready to accept an otherwise unqualified candidate as lawful imām, if he could just lead and defend the Muslim community.

Moreover, al-Juwaynī is much less explicit than al-Māwardī in equating the imām with the caliph or the Commander of the Believers.[509] This might be interpreted as indicating that al-Juwaynī viewed the position of the imām as

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504   Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth 227–9.
505   Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth 231–4.
506   Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth 239–78.
507   Kennedy, Caliphate 226.
508   Kennedy, Caliphate 224–6. See also Hassan, Longing 107.
509   Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth 69, however, explains that after Abū Bakr, who is called khalīfat rasūl Allāh, the caliphate continued in the imāms.

not necessarily identical with that of the caliph. Accordingly, holders of the sultanate could view themselves as *imām*s despite the continued existence of persons referred to as caliphs. In his treatise, the author apparently envisioned a supreme *imām* who transcended the extant political offices by uniting the imamate and the sultanate in one person.[510] Moreover, al-Juwaynī's terminological choice to speak almost exclusively about the *imām* allowed him to bypass the practical question of what should happen to the ʿAbbasid caliphs of his time.

Although the disintegration of the Seljuq polity shortly after al-Juwaynī's death put an end to all schemes to establish a Seljuq sultan-*imām*,[511] the idea that the imamate need not be based on kinship, but rather on true authority remained part of the political discourse in Sunni Islam. In the Mamluk domains, one of its primary advocates was the Shāfiʿī chief judge Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333)[512] in his treatise *Taḥrīr al-aḥkām fī tadbīr ahl al-Islām* (Record of the regulations on the organization of the people of Islam).[513]

While Ibn Jamāʿa's treatise begins with a customary explanation of the necessity of the imamate according to revelation, its conventional character ends abruptly with Ibn Jamāʿa's differentiation between two types of imamates, one based on election (*ikhtiyāriyya*) and one based on force (*qahriyya*). An *imām* appointed by election must fulfill ten qualifications: He must be male, free, of legal age, of sound mind, a Muslim, of moral probity, brave, of Qurashī descent, knowledgeable, and able to fulfill his political functions. When legally invested with the *bayʿa*, such an *imām* can expect the same level of obedience as that due to God and His Messenger, regardless of whether his investiture is based on election or designation.[514]

An imamate based on force is established when there is no *imām* and a person possessing force (*shawka*) overcomes the people by military might, regardless of whether or not he fulfills the requirements named above. In such a case, no official appointment or explicit oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) is necessary, but Ibn Jamāʿa postulates a kind of implicit *bayʿa*, since he writes that if "he overpowers the people […] without *bayʿa* or appointment (*istikhlāf*),

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510   Kennedy, *Caliphate* 225.

511   Kennedy, *Caliphate* 223, 226.

512   On his biography, see Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 350–1; Salibi, Dynasty 99–100.

513   On the text, see also, e.g., Hassan, *Longing* 108–11; Rosenthal, *Thought* 43–51; Lambton, *State* 138–43.

514   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 355–7; [part 2] 38–42.

his *bayʿa* is contracted."[515] The Muslims must obey a person who attained the imamate in this way in order to preserve their unity. Ibn Jamāʿa underlines that such an *imām* may be an ignoramus (*jāhil*) or a person not legally qualified as righteous. Moreover, if another contender for the imamate later defeats, through superior military might, an *imām* whose position is based on force, then the first *imām* is automatically deposed and the successful contender takes over. No matter how an *imām* attains his position, there must never be more than one holder of the imamate. Furthermore, people may address him as "successor of the Messenger of God" (*khalīfat rasūl Allāh*).[516]

Like al-Māwardī, Ibn Jamāʿa pays special attention to how *imām*s delegate parts of their authority to other persons. According to the Mamluk author, the *imām*, who is identified here explicitly as the caliph, may appoint officials to exercise authority in a geographically or otherwise limited way. A person enjoying general delegated authority in a defined territory may be referred to as *malik* or *sulṭān* and must fulfill the same qualifications as the elected *imām*, apart from Qurashī descent. If a *malik* seizes a territory by military might and *shawka*, the caliph should officially appoint him as ruler over this territory. If the *malik* in question lacks the necessary qualifications for his post, the caliph may nevertheless appoint him, but should also provide him with a deputy who fulfills all the mandatory conditions.[517] In his discussion of the vizierate, Ibn Jamāʿa differentiates between two types of viziers in the same way as al-Māwardī did.[518]

In several key aspects Ibn Jamāʿa's vision of the Muslim political system differs from those of al-Māwardī and al-Juwaynī. Like al-Māwardī but unlike al-Juwaynī, Ibn Jamāʿa upholds designation as a legally valid form of appointing an *imām*, he identifies the *imām* beyond all doubt with the caliph, and he lists Qurashī descent among the *imām*'s necessary qualifications. Moreover, he follows al-Māwardī quite closely with regard to delegated authority, but adapts al-Māwardī's terminology to his time by using *malik* and *sulṭān* instead of *amīr* when discussing territorially confined political authority. Like al-Juwaynī, Ibn Jamāʿa pays greater attention to the question of worldly power using the term *shawka*. Yet, the role of worldly power in the systems of these two authors is notably different. For al-Juwaynī, *shawka* plays a role in the election of the *imām* when there is only one elector. Moreover, the elected *imām* must have

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515   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 357.
516   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 357–8; [part 2] 42–4.
517   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 3589; [part 2] 44–5.
518   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 365–7; [part 2] 54–6.

sufficient "support and ability" to fulfill his intramundane functions. Still, election is the only legal way to attain the imamate under usual conditions and al-Juwaynī only accepts the possibility that a future *imām* may seize the office by force if just one or indeed no qualified candidate is available. Moreover, seizure of the caliphate does not automatically render the regulations for the *imām*'s election inoperative. For Ibn Jamāʿa, however, the seizure of the imamate through *shawka* is a legitimate way of attaining the office, regardless of whether the person in question is qualified. Moreover, Ibn Jamāʿa considers the forceful appropriation of the imamate by an unqualified ruler lawful, even if more eligible persons are available. The only legal regulation limiting the seizure of the imamate by means of *shawka* is the requirement that there never be more than one *imām* at a time. If we take Ibn Jamāʿa's ideas further, since the moral probity of an *imām* relying on brute force is irrelevant, then such an *imām* could even kill a rightfully elected Qurashī *imām* and then assume his office.[519]

Ibn Jamāʿa's vision of the Islamic polity was shaped by his historical context. One can understand his text as suggesting that the Mamluk sultans had taken over the responsibilities of the caliphs and thus actually qualified as the *imām*s of the legal discourse.[520] Given that the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1258 had left the Islamic community without a caliph for several years and that it was widely held that the Muslims must never be without an *imām*, a transfer of the imamate to the Mamluk sultan might have appeared plausible to many. Against this background, Ibn Jamāʿa suggested that the Mamluk rulers could do well without an ʿAbbasid caliph by claiming that they had seized the imamate through *shawka*, thus becoming legitimate *imām*s. It seems probable that Ibn Jamāʿa's close connection to sultanic authority—sultans al-Ashraf Khalīl b. Qalāwūn (r. 689–93/1290–3) and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn appointed him as Shāfiʿī chief judge of Cairo multiple times[521]—played a decisive role in shaping his vision of Mamluk rule.

6.2.3.3   The Caliphate in Mamluk Politics

However, rather than publicly claiming the status of *imām*, Sultan Baybars, the first long-reigning Mamluk ruler after the Mongol conquest of Iraq, installed the uncle of the last ʿAbbasid ruler of Baghdad as Caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 659/1261) in Cairo in 659/1261, and the sultan and the most prominent members of

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519   For comparative remarks on al-Juwaynī and Ibn Jamāʿa, see also Hassan, *Longing* 109–11.

520   Hassan, *Longing* 111; Madelung, Imāma 1168. See also Lambton, *State* 139–40.

521   Salibi, Dynasty 99–100. See also Garcin, Histoire 68.

his court pledged allegiance (*bayʿa*) to him. Several days later, al-Mustanṣir solemnly invested Baybars as sultan of Egypt, southeastern Anatolia, the Hijaz, Yemen, Iraq, and all territories that the Mamluk ruler might conquer in the future; thus he transferred the military and administrative rights and duties of the caliphate to him. When, shortly thereafter, al-Mustanṣir met his fate in a failed attempt to recapture Baghdad, Baybars had another scion of the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad appointed as caliph in Cairo in 661/1262 with the throne name al-Ḥākim (r. 661–701/1262–1301). Baybars' reinstallation of the caliphate and his caliphal investiture as sultan were primarily designed to increase his legitimacy among audiences within and beyond the Mamluk borders. Accordingly, the Mamluk ruler ensured that court events of great communicative significance accompanied all important steps of this process.[522]

Both the legitimizing function of the establishment of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in Cairo and the course of pertinent events have been the focus of ample attention in earlier studies and need not detain us here.[523] What is important for us is that Baybars, by installing an ʿAbbasid caliph in Cairo who thereafter invested him with the sultanate, laid the foundations of a system of caliphal-sultanic coexistence that continued to function, with some modifications, to the end of the Mamluk Sultanate. In this system, ʿAbbasid caliphs were entitled to hold the titles of *khalīfa*, *amīr al-muʾminīn*, and *imām* as their predecessors had done, although there is evidence that the title *khalīfat al-muslimīn* (caliph of the Muslims) to some degree came to supplant the older honorifics of *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* (successor/deputy of the Messenger of God) and *khalīfat Allāh* (deputy of God).[524] Possibly, the title of *khalīfat al-muslimīn*, which, in its grammatical structure closely resembled the older form of *amīr al-muʾminīn*, was intended to highlight the role of the caliph in Cairo, that is, that he was indeed the caliph of the entire Islamic world and not only the ruler of a limited territory. In support of this interpretation, the term *khalīfat al-muslimīn* only makes sense if one understands its first part not literally as

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522 Hassan, *Longing* 70–80.

523 See esp. Heidemann, *Kalifat*; as well as, e.g., Aigle, Legitimizing 224–6; Aigle, Les inscriptions 63–5; Aigle, Word; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols* 56–63; Arnold, *Caliphate* 89–98; Banister, Revisiting 219–22; Becker, Studien 367–74; Berkey, Mamluk Religious Policy 11–2; Broadbridge, Legitimacy 97–8, 104, 115; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 14–5, 62–3, 84, 88, 149–50, 183, 199; Haarmann, Miṣr 165–8; Hassan, *Longing* 69–88; Herzog, Legitimität 258–60, 263–4; Herzog, *Geschichte* 331–2, 339–45; Holt, Observations 501–3; Holt, Position 243–4; Jackson, Primacy 58–9; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 338–40; Little, Religion 172–4; Northrup, Sultanate 255–6, 269; Northrup, *Slave* 164–7; Petry, Institution 436–4; Schimmel, Glimpses 353–4; Schimmel, Kalif 7–10.

524 Cf. Hassan, *Longing* 87. See also Marsham, Commander.

"successor" or "deputy," but rather as denoting the office of the caliph itself. The establishment of the caliphate in Cairo also shaped sultanic titulature. From Baybars' time onward, Mamluk rulers used *qasīm amīr al-muʾminīn* (companion of the Commander of the Believers) as a *laqab* (cognomen or honorific title).[525]

Al-Ẓāhirī's *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik* provides a helpful depiction of the caliphs's role and his relationship with the sultan in later Mamluk times. After dozens of pages discussing the sultanate, al-Ẓāhirī turns to the caliph and other high-ranking civilian officials:

> The third chapter on the description of the Commander of the Believers and the explanation of his situation: It would have been appropriate that he comes first [that is, before the sultan], but we wanted to give a more exalted rank to the *malik* [that is, the sultan] since the swearing of the *bayʿa* has been transferred from him [that is, the caliph] to the sultan (*ṣāra bi-l-mubāyaʿa minhu ilā l-sulṭān*). [The chapter also includes] the description of the chief judges, the electors (*ahl al-ḥall wa-l-ʿaqd*),[526] the leading scholars of religion, and the judges.
>
> He is the deputy (*khalīfa*) of God on Earth, the nephew of His Messenger, the lord of the messengers, and the inheritor of his successorship (*wārith al-khilāfa ʿanhu*). God Most High had made him the ruler of the entire territory of Islam and none of the rulers of the East and the West may be referred to with the term "sultan" unless he has sworn the *bayʿa* to him. One of the leading authorities issued a *fatwā* that whoever raises himself to the sultanate by force with the sword without swearing the *bayʿa* to him is a Khārijī and is not allowed to appoint a deputy or a judge. If he does something like this [that is, raise himself to the sultanate by force without swearing the *bayʿa*], all the legal rulings [in his realm] are void (*bāṭil*) and the conclusion of marriage contracts is void. Much more is said about this; the quintessence of the problem is that in reality, the term "sultan" is only to be applied to the master (*ṣāḥib*) of Egypt—may God let him triumph. [The sultan of Egypt] is now the most exalted and most distinguished of rulers because of the rank of the lord of forefathers and those born later [that is, the Prophet Muḥammad] and because he

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525   Northrup, *Slave* 174; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 65, 108. See also Heidemann, *Kalifat* 157, 174, 183, 189, 224, 257; Aigle, Les inscriptions 63–4; Aigle, Legitimizing 225; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols* 56; Amitai, Remarks 47–8, 50–1; Schultz, Coins 254; Banister, Revisiting 220; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 105, 125; Moukarzel, Embassies 698.

526   For this translation, cf. Gibb et al., Ahl al-Ḥall 264.

is honored by the Commander of the Believers through the legal delega-
tion (*tafwīḍ*) of the rank of sultan by agreement of the four heads [of the
schools of law].

Once, I saw documents of appointment including the delegation of the
rank of sultan to several rulers from the caliphal chancery. One of them
was for al-Malik al-Kāmil, the master of Hasankeyf,[527] and another one for
the master of the Yemen, another one for the master of India, and another
one for the master of Mecca, but I did not write them down.

Among the conditions and the duties of the Commander of the Believ-
ers is what we have [already] mentioned [above] regarding the sultan, but
it is [also] obligatory that he devotes himself to knowledge and that he
has collections of books. If the sultan travels on important business, he
accompanies him for the benefit of the Muslims. To him belong districts
that account for his expenditures as well as beautiful residences.

It is said that in the lands of the west, the kings of the west have sworn
the *bayʿa* to offspring of the Fatimid caliphs, but I have no accurate records
about this and whether or not it is permissible. The *ʿulamāʾ* must look into
this.[528]

Earlier in al-Ẓāhirī's discussion of the sultan's investiture, he writes:

As for the *mawkib* on the occasion of the investiture, […it includes] the
gathering of the electors in the presence of the Commander of the Believ-
ers, the gathering of the *amīrs* and the pillars of the noble dominion. The
soldiers have to kiss [the ground] in front of [the sultan] after he has taken
[his] seat on the throne of rulership [and] after the Commander of the
Believers has sworn the *bayʿa* to him and has shaken hands with him.[529]

In a passage about the Mamluk sultans' exalted status vis-à-vis all other rulers,
we read:

The Prophet—may God bless him and grant him salvation—was the one
possessing true leadership (*zimām*)[530] on Earth, then his succesorship
(*khilāfa*) was transferred to *imām* Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Then the Com-
panions and caliphs—may God be pleased with all of them—inherited

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527 City in present-day southeastern Turkey.
528 Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 89–90.
529 Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 86.
530 Cf. Lane, *Lexicon* v, 1249.

it one after the other until it passed today by means of the swearing
of the *bayʿa* by the Commander of the Believers, in agreement with
the electors, the *ʿulamāʾ*, the pillars of the noble dominion, and with
the approval of the lordly *amīr*s, and the victorious armies [to the sul-
tan].[531]

In these passages, al-Ẓāhirī refers to all the important duties, prerogatives, and
characteristics of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in late Mamluk Cairo. Among the
caliph's mainly ceremonial and symbolic functions, his role during the install-
ation of a new sultan was particularly important.[532] While in themselves not
sufficient to invest a sultan, the caliph's presence, his bestowal of a robe on
the new sultan, and the latter's caliphal recognition in speech or writing con-
stituted important elements in this legitimating ritual that could not be easily
omitted.[533]

Whereas in early Mamluk times, the sultan, along with the important mem-
bers of his court, had sworn the *bayʿa* to the caliph, in the mid-eighth/four-
teenth century this changed when the caliph gave the *bayʿa* to the newly inves-
ted sultan, thus expressing a reversal in political status.[534] The first known
instance of this change in roles took place in 742/1342 during the investiture of
al-Nāṣir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 742–3/1342) about whose investit-
ure Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1470)[535] writes straightforwardly without indicating
that anything was unusual:

The caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad, the four judges
of Egypt, the four judges of Damascus, and all the *amīr*s of 1,000 soldiers
(*jamīʿ al-umarāʾ al-muqaddamīn*) attended. The caliph swore the *bayʿa* to
him [that is, al-Nāṣir Aḥmad] as [the new] sultan (*bāyaʿahū al-khalīfa bi-
l-salṭana*) and they kissed the ground in front of him as was customary.[536]

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531   Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 54. The manuscript used for the edition has a lacuna at the end of the
         passage, but the missing text can be inferred from the context, as it stands at the begin-
         ning of a chapter entitled "Description of the noble sultanate." See also Holt, Observations
         504–5; Holt, Structure 45, who likewise understands this passage as referring to the sultan.
532   Holt, Observations 504.
533   Holt, Structure 44–5. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iii, 280–1; al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* ii,
         240–4; Holt, Observations 504; Holt, Position 244–5; Banister, Revisiting 225–6; Schimmel,
         Kalif 15–7; Heidemann, *Kalifat* 191, 202; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 183.
534   Holt, Observations 502, 504. See also Holt, Structure 45.
535   On him, see Mauder, Development 969–70.
536   Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm* x, 49.

Al-Ẓāhirī clearly states that through the act of swearing the *bayʿa*, the political leadership once held by the prophets and then inherited by the caliphs was transferred to the sultans. This vision of the political structure of the Muslim community, according to which the sultan is explicitly identified as the one who truly wields supreme power—that is, the *imām* of legal discourse—and in which the caliph serves merely as a legitimating agent who personifies the unity of the Muslim *umma* and establishes a direct link to the Prophet Muḥammad, marked a new step in the process of developing a political theory in which the sultan takes over the *imām*'s role.[537]

As a trained jurisprudent, al-Ẓāhirī also refers to the earlier concept, according to which the caliph is the true ruler of the Islamic lands and only those leaders legally invested as his deputies exercise power in accordance with Islamic law. This in turn means that in the domains of rulers lacking official caliphal appointment, all legal transactions are void. This view, which we encountered in our discussion of al-Māwardī, was widely shared among Muslim jurisprudents, both during the Mamluk period and beyond.[538] Mona Hassan underlines the significance of the caliph and caliphal investiture when she writes: "The legitimacy of state affairs, public finances, court judgments, marital contracts, and even congregational prayers all hinged on his [that is, the caliph's] existence."[539] According to this interpretation, the caliph's primary function was no longer to rule, but to lawfully deputize his rights to others, thus guaranteeing that legal transactions performed in the territories of his deputies were valid and binding under Islamic law.

For the Egyptian ruling elite, the caliph's presence in Cairo constituted a unique mark of honor that elevated the country and its ruler above all rival Muslim polities and leaders, as al-Ẓāhirī demonstrates when he argues that, strictly speaking, the ruler of Egypt alone is allowed to bear the title of "sultan" because of his close relationship to the caliph and the latter's delegation of authority to him. The requests from foreign political leaders to be formally invested by the Egyptian caliph further buttressed this position. Whereas al-Ẓāhirī mentions such official appointments rather summarily for Anatolian, Yemeni, Indian, and Meccan rulers, other sources provide more detailed information. During the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, delegations from Indian rulers to Cairo conveyed requests for official diplomas of

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537   See also Banister, Revisiting 224.

538   Hassan, *Longing* 14, 17, 73–4, 92, 101–3, 135. See also Holt, Structure 44; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 181, 217; Sourdel, Ḵẖalīfa 945; Heidemann, *Kalifat* 28.

539   Hassan, *Longing* 72.

investiture to the caliph,[540] as did envoys of the Muzaffarid rulers of Shīrāz in the eighth/fourteenth century.[541] Moreover, in the early history of the Ottoman Sultanate, Sultan Bāyezīd I (r. 791–804/1389–1402) obtained his official investiture as *sulṭān al-Rūm* from the caliph in Cairo.[542] Often, missions requesting caliphal investiture not only brought messages and gifts for the ʿAbbasid caliph, but also for the Mamluk sultan; this underlined his status as ruler over the territories in which the caliphate had its seat—a fact on which the Mamluks could, in turn, base their claim for supremacy in the Islamicate world.[543]

Although this system, in which the caliph served primarily to guarantee the legality and legitimacy of the status of rulers in and beyond the Mamluk realms, remained largely stable over the course of Mamluk history, we know of two concerted attempts to make far reaching changes. These attempts demonstrate that what was at stake was not just a purely theoretical and academic question of legal or political thought, rather such efforts to change the subsidiary status of the caliphate translated into real-life politics. Often, those who envisioned a different status for the caliphate not only risked their social status, freedom, and physical integrity for their views, but indeed lost one or all of these if their struggle for a new political system failed. In this regard, the first case in point is an uprising in Damascus in 788/1386 known as the Ẓāhirī revolt. It aimed at overthrowing the Mamluk sultanate and installing a caliph as a real and powerful ruler. Its high-ranking civilian and military leaders, as well as other figures held to be involved, were ousted from their offices, fined, imprisoned, deported, and/or tortured.[544]

The second instance of note was of a decidedly different character, but underscored again the stakes involved in changing the established relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate. In 815/1412, a faction of rebellious *amīr*s made the caliph al-Mustaʿīn II al-ʿAbbās (r. as caliph 808–16/1406–14, r. as sultan 815/1412) sultan against his will by means of a ruse. They sought to use him as a figurehead in their attempts to depose Barqūq's young son al-Nāṣir

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540   Hassan, *Longing* 95–7. See also Banister, Revisiting 222; Haarmann, Arrogance 121; Hambly,
       Baghdad 211–2, 214–5; Muslu, *Ottomans* 9–10; Schimmel, Kalif 23; Becker, Studien 376–7;
       Auer, *Symbols* 107–17; Har-El, *Struggle* 114–21.

541   Banister, Revisiting 222. See also Becker, Studien 377–8.

542   Hassan, *Longing* 97. See also Banister, Revisiting 222; Kramers and Bosworth, Sulṭān 850;
       Murphey, *Exploring* 78; Becker, Studien 378; Broadbridge, *Kingship* 150, 175; Atçil, *Scholars*
       21.

543   Hassan, *Longing* 97. See also Banister, Revisiting 226–7; Petry, *Protectors* 32; Garcin, Histoire 77.

544   Wiederhold, Elite, 209–15.

Faraj (r. 801–8/1399–1405, 808–15/1405–12). When Faraj had been eliminated, it became clear that al-Mustaʿīn would not be able to exercise any independent political power and within about half a year, he was forced to resign his office to one of the rebellious *amīr*s, who became known as Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (r. 815–24/1412–21). Less than two years later, al-Muʾayyad Shaykh made sure that al-Mustaʿīn also lost his office as caliph to his brother. The former caliph was then imprisoned in Cairo and Alexandria.[545] Together with the Ẓāhirī revolt, the al-Mustaʿīn affair nevertheless indicated that inhabitants of the Mamluk Sultanate opined that those who held caliphal rank were qualified to rule over the lands of Islam.[546] At the same time, it is clear that usually, caliphs stood under the control of leading members of the Mamluk military elite in general and the sultan in particular. We know of several examples in which Mamluk rulers exiled, imprisoned, deposed, or replaced caliphs with their relatives.[547]

With the caliph's political influence largely limited, he spent most of his time fulfilling what could be loosely referred to as representative, religious, and scholarly functions. As a distinguished and revered relative of the Prophet whose name was mentioned in every Friday prayer, the caliph played an important role in the Mamluk population's efforts to obtain *baraka*[548] and he was expected to pray for the well-being of the realm and its ruler.[549]

Mamluk sultans repeatedly called upon the caliph as a symbol of Muslim unity by assigning them prominent, though by no means singular roles in courtly events. As al-Ẓāhirī states, the caliph was expected to accompany the sultan on his travels, thus signaling to those who met the sultan that the Mamluk ruler enjoyed supreme legal authority as the caliph's fully mandated deputy. At the same time, the sultans' habit of taking the caliph with them when they left the capital ensured that the latter could not be used by members of the ruling elite as the emblematic head of a revolt against the sultan.[550]

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545   Holt, Observations 506–7. See also Hassan, *Longing* 93–5; Schimmel, Kalif 23; Garcin, Histoire 61–2. On other, unrealized attempts to invest a caliph with the sultanate, see Banister, Sword.

546   See also Hassan, *Longing* 93, 95.

547   Hassan, *Longing* 88–92. See also Holt, Observations 506; Schimmel, Glimpses 254; Schimmel, Kalif 17–20.

548   Hassan, *Longing* 92–3. See also Banister, Revisiting 226.

549   Banister, Revisiting 223, 228–30, 244.

550   These observations seem difficult to reconcile with the statement in Vermeulen, Aspects 556, that the caliph "ne joue aucun rôle dans la vie cérémonielle publique."

On a more regular basis, at the beginning of every month, the caliph, together with the four chief judges, wished the sultan well.[551] This ceremony was not only well-suited to symbolically express the differences in status between the caliph and the sultan, as the former ascended to the citadel and visited the latter, but it also showed that the caliph was understood as a high-ranking civilian official, similar to the chief judges appointed by the sultan. The fact that al-Ẓāhirī discusses the caliphate together with the chief judgeship also confirms this.[552]

Furthermore, al-Ẓāhirī makes clear that the caliph was expected to participate in scholarly life by collecting a library and dedicating himself to study. Some of the caliphs in Cairo received a thorough education in religious disciplines,[553] although none of them ever became famous as a full-fledged ʿālim. Still, caliphs were often closely related to well-known scholarly families through marriage and other social interactions.[554]

Caliphs relied on several sources of revenue to pay for their livelihood. Among other elements, since the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century they administered the sepulcher of the Prophet's great-granddaughter Sayyida Nafīsa (d. 208/824) and benefited from the economic capital and the religious prestige this shrine commanded.[555] Moreover, caliphs also often had revenue-producing landholdings, albeit rather limited in size, at their disposal.[556]

While highly informative about the realities of the Cairo caliphate, al-Ẓāhirī's work pays only very limited attention to theoretical conceptualizations of the caliphate in the late Mamluk period. Here, Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā and Maʾāthir al-ināfa fī maʿālim al-khilāfa (Sublime exploits on the distinguishing marks of the caliphate) by his fellow chancery clerk Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, who was half a century older, are particularly useful.[557] The latter work, dedicated to the caliph al-Muʿtaḍid bi-Llāh III Dāwūd (r. 817–45/1414–41),[558] closely follows al-Māwardī's earlier legal teachings on the caliphate and portrays the ʿAbbasids in

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551   Holt, Observations 505. See also Banister, Revisiting 235; Banister, Casting 108–9; Schimmel, Glimpses 354; Schimmel, Kalif 22.

552   See also Holt, Structure 45, 58; Banister, Revisiting 221.

553   Banister, Revisiting 221, 223.

554   Banister, Revisiting 224–5.

555   Banister, Revisiting 227–8, 241–2. See also Schimmel, Glimpses 354; Schimmel, Kalif 11; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 9–10.

556   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 291–2; Schimmel, Kalif 20, 22.

557   On al-Qalqashandī's political thought, see also Hassan, *Longing* 126–31; and on this work Bauden, Diplomatics 32.

558   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 3–4, 7.

Cairo as full-fledged holders of this office.[559] Moreover, it bears witness to al-Qalqashandī's interests as a chancery official, as four of its seven main chapters discuss and reproduce official caliphal diplomas of investiture, designation documents, diplomatic letters, and similar texts.[560] Other chapters are dedicated to biographies of all the pre-Umayyad, Umayyad, and ʿAbbasid caliphs up to the author's time, accounts of their reigns and capitals, lists of actions they performed first (*awāʾil*), and other noteworthy stories connected to them.[561] The comprehensiveness with which al-Qalqashandī treats these subjects indicates his interest in contextualizing and integrating the caliphate of his time into the long history of this institution, thus pointing out its significance and legitimacy.

In his introduction, al-Qalqashandī discusses the meaning, history, and proper application of the term *khalīfa*, arguing, inter alia, that one may also use it when referring to the supreme leaders of the Muslim community after the so-called "rightly-guided" (*rāshidūn*) caliphs, although some early authorities wanted to limit its application to the first Muslim rulers.[562] Like many other scholars, al-Qalqashandī had strong reservations against the title *khalīfat Allāh* (lit. successor of God), given that God cannot be absent or dead and thus cannot have a successor. The author instead prefers the designation *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* which was, as he states, used by the first caliph Abū Bakr.[563] Furthermore, al-Qalqashandī opines that the caliphal title of *imām* constituted an ʿAbbasid

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559   Cf. for al-Māwardī, e.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 10, 14, 16, 29, 30, 32, 34, 38, 41, 45, 47, 56, 59, 69, 72–5; and on the ʿAbbasids in Cairo, e.g., al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 2–3, 23–4; ii, 111–221, 223–4; iii, 375–81.

560   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 6–7; ii, 260–353; iii, 1–333.

561   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 6–7, 81–355; ii, 1–224; iii, 334–74.

562   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 8–13. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 17; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 444–5. On the term *khalīfa* and its Quranic background, see, e.g., Paret, Vicarius 228–30; Paret, Signification; al-Qāḍī, Term; Watt, Caliph 565–8; Margoliouth, Sense 322–3.

563   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 13–7. Cf. for the *ʿulamāʾ*'s general endorsement of this position al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām* 22; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 445; Crone and Hinds, *Caliph* 19–23; Paret, Vicarius 230; Afsaruddin, Caliphate 132; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 300; Imber, *Ebuʾs-suʿud* 104; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 160–1; Watt, Caliph 572; Crone, *Thought* 128–9, 224; Lambton, *State* 186; Lambton, Khalīfa 948; Lambton, Quis 127; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 245–6. On the title *khalīfat Allāh* and its history, see esp. Crone and Hinds, *Caliph* 4–23; as well as al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 445; Rosenthal, *Thought* 37; Paret, Vicarius; Afsaruddin, Caliphate 130; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 9–10, 220–1; Drews, *Karolinger* 409–10; Watt, Caliph 568–72; Goldziher, Sens 335–8; Margoliouth, Sense 327; Watt, *Thought* 33–4; Crone, *Thought* 195; Marsham, Caliph; Lambton, Khalīfa 948; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 108–9, 130; Scheiner, Aspekte 581–4. On the title *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, see Paret, Vicarius 226, 228; Afsaruddin, Caliphate 130; Crone and Hinds, *Caliph* 16–7; Watt, Caliph 568; Watt, *Thought* 32–3; Lambton, Khalīfa 947–8; Scheiner, Aspekte 583–4.

innovation based on Shiʿi terminological practices,[564] whereas the honorific *amīr al-muʾminīn* dates back to ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's time.[565]

The first proper chapter most clearly demonstrates al-Qalqashandī's embeddedness in the Shāfiʿī legal discourse on the imamate. Quoting al-Māwardī's work at length, al-Qalqashandī addresses the customary topics of the necessity of the imamate according to revelation and the *imām*'s mandatory qualifications, which according to him include maleness, legal age, sanity, sight, hearing, speech, soundness of limbs, freedom, Islam, probity, bravery, sound judgment, and Qurashī descent. Unlike al-Juwaynī, al-Qalqashandī upholds the last condition as binding, but is willing to consider other solutions if no qualified Qurashī is available. In such a situation, one may appoint a member of the Prophet's wider kinship group, the Banū Kināna. If no Kinānī is available, the next best choice is any descendent of Abraham's son Ishmael. In the event no member Ishmael's offspring fulfills all other necessary conditions, one may invest any otherwise qualified candidate.[566]

Al-Qalqashandī basically endorses the same ideas as his fellow Shāfiʿī Ibn Jamāʿa with regard to how a legitimate *imām* is appointed: While he strongly prefers a qualified candidate's election or designation, he also accepts an *imām* who seizes the office by means of force (*qahr*) if there is no other *imām*, regardless of whether he fulfills all conditions stipulated. For al-Qalqashandī, this is necessary to ensure that the regulations of Islamic law remain effective.[567]

Al-Qalqashandī's description of the *imām*'s rights and duties closely follows those of al-Māwardī, whom he quotes in part verbatim.[568] He also embraces the latter's position about the delegation of the *imām*'s authority, including the notions of the fully-mandated vizierate (*wizārat al-tafwīḍ*), the executive vizierate (*wizārat al-tanfīdh*), the voluntarily conferred governorship (*imārat al-istikfāʾ*), and the seized governorship (*imārat al-istīlāʾ*) discussed above.[569]

One of the most interesting elements of al-Qalqashandī's political thought is his application of these centuries-old teachings on delegated authority to

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564 This statement is at variance with evidence for pre-ʿAbbasid use of this title, cf. Scheiner, Aspekte 584–5. On this title, see also Drews, *Karolinger* 413–5; van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 701.

565 Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 21, 26. On this title, see, e.g., Afsaruddin, Caliphate 130; Watt, *Thought* 34; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 475–6; Lambton, Khalīfa 947–8; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 10–1, 203, 314; Marsham, Commander; Wensinck, Amīr al-Muʾminīn; Marsham, Caliph 8; van Ess, *Theologie* iv, 702; Scheiner, Aspekte 584.

566 Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 29–39.

567 Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 39–59.

568 Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 59–62.

569 Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 74–6.

the conditions of his time in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*.[570] In a passage preceding a discussion of investiture documents for officials appointed by Mamluk sultans entitled "On the explanation [of how] these appointments relate to the lawful (*sharʿī*) method [of delegating power],"[571] the author explains that the Mamluk sultanate holds a middle position between al-Māwardī's seized governorship (*imārat al-istīlāʾ*) and the fully-mandated vizierate (*wizārat al-tafwīḍ*), but is closer to the former than to the latter. Al-Qalqashandī points out that the Mamluk sultans fulfill all the qualifications enumerated by al-Māwardī for seized governorships and thus, once officially recognized by the caliph, are allowed to delegate parts of their authority to lower-ranking officials in the same way the caliph does. Hence, appointments of officials by sultans are fully valid according to Islamic law, although the caliph is still in principle the supreme authority.

One can hardly overestimate the significance—and ingenuity—of this interpretation of the political structure of the Mamluk Sultanate. By attributing to Mamluk sultans an intermediate status between that of an *amīr al-istīlāʾ* and *wazīr al-tafwīḍ*, al-Qalqashandī, on the one hand, recognizes that Mamluk rulers reach their position not initially through caliphal investiture, but rather by seizing their territory by force. On the other hand, since they fulfill all the requirements of legal governorship, the caliph must delegate to them his general authority over their territory, which means that the Mamluk sultans are not dependent on the caliph's willingness to recognize their status. Rather, provided a candidate demonstrates that he fulfills the necessary qualifications, the caliph must appoint him as his deputy while nominally retaining his position as Commander of the Believers. Thereby, the caliph ensures that legal transactions taking place in the sultans' territories are lawful. Here al-Qalqashandī's legal reasoning reflects Mamluk realities, in which caliphs had little choice but to officially invest any candidate who managed to establish himself at the top of the military elite.

Yet, when considered in detail, this interpretation of the Mamluk office of the sultan as an *imārat al-istīlāʾ* posed two serious challenges: First, the territories of an *amīr al-istīlāʾ* were not supposed to include the seat of the caliphate—this was a problem in the Mamluk context, given that the Mamluk sultan and the ʿAbbasid caliph both resided in Cairo. Second, an *amīr al-istīlāʾ* held authority only in his domains and could not—as Mamluk rulers strived to do—act as supreme overlord of Muslim-ruled lands in their entirety.

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570   But see also al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 74, 80.

571   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* i, 72.

Here, al-Qalqashandī's initiative to locate the Mamluk sultanate in an inter-mediary position between an *imārat al-istīlāʾ* and a *wizārat al-tafwīḍ* is decisive. When seen as fully-mandated viziers, the sultans retain their fully-delegated authority over all affairs of the realm, but can still live side-by-side with the caliph. Moreover, as fully-mandated viziers, Mamluk sultans held, for prac-tical purposes, the same authority as the caliph over all the lands under the latter's jurisdiction. Thus al-Qalqashandī could justify the Mamluk sultans' claim to the rank of universal Muslim rulers while sharing their seat with the caliph.

Other passages of *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* provide further information on the prerogat-ives of late Mamluk caliphs and their titulature. As a manual for clerks respons-ible, inter alia, for diplomatic correspondence, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* pays considerable attention to the structure of non-Mamluk polities. In the Christian lands, al-Qalqashandī identifies an officeholder comparable to the caliph: the pope of Rome. He writes:

> The pope (*al-pāp*) [*sic*]: [...] This is the title of the one in charge of the affairs of religion of the imperial Christians (*umūr dīn al-naṣāra al-mali-kāniyya*) in the city of Rome. As for what is said in [...] that he holds with them the rank of the Qān among the Tatars, this is obviously wrong, because among the Christians the pope holds the position of the caliph. Among them, he is even entrusted with declaring [what is] allowed and forbidden, and they refer to him with regard to their religious affairs in contrast to the Qān, whose authority (*amr*) is limited to political rule (*mulk*).[572]

This passage shows that to al-Qalqashandī as a late Mamluk author, it made sense to liken the caliph to the pope, a Christian officeholder who, in his under-standing, wielded purely religious authority and did not explicitly execute political rule.[573]

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572   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 472. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iii, 278–80; v, 408. For authors describing the caliph as "summus pontifex" or "pope," cf. Martyr, *Legatio* 260–1; Baumgar-ten, Travels 328. See also Davis, *Trickster* 106. On comparisons between the papacy and the caliphate, see Oesterle, *Kalifat* 47–61; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 205–6; Becker, Studien 359–60; Nagel, *Staat* ii, 177, 205; König, *Views* 245, 252, 261–3.

573   This does not mean that the popes of the early tenth/sixteenth century were politic-ally unimportant or powerless, given, among other things, their role as heads of the Papal States. However, what matters here is not their role in real-life politics, but al-Qalqashandī's perception of it. On his view of the papacy, see also König, *Views* 248, 256, 258–9, 261, 263, 265.

This situation notwithstanding, al-Qalqashandī was not willing to transfer caliphal titles to sultans, although, as Hassan notes, "by the eighth/fifteenth century, it seems that all Mamluk legal schools were referring to the *sulṭān* as the *imām*."[574] If Hassan is right in her characterization, this implies that al-Qalqashandī was an unusually conservative author, especially since he not only limits the use of the titles *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* and *amīr al-muʾminīn* to bearers properly invested with the caliphate,[575] but he also refers to the appellation of *imām* as "belonging to the *laqab*s of the caliphs."[576]

Al-Qalqashandī's writings on the caliphate show that al-Māwardī's legal teachings about this office remained, albeit with some modifications, highly influential in the discursive communication of late Mamluk courts. Moreover, al-Qalqashandī also demonstrated that it was possible to adjust these doctrines to the political realities of his time without having to assume that the Mamluk Sultanate constituted an imamate by seizure, as implicitly suggested by Ibn Jamāʿa. Rather, the legal model that al-Qalqashandī traced back to al-Māwardī was flexible enough to confer full, though deputized, regal authority on the Mamluk sultan while at the same time reserving a nominally supreme status to the caliph. The sultan thus remained the caliph's most distinguished subordinate, not a ruler in his own right. The caliph's exalted rank found expression in a centuries-old titulature that, for al-Qalqashandī, was still his exclusive prerogative. However, even to al-Qalqashandī it was obvious that the caliphs of his day exerted little political influence, but were rather occupied with religious matters.[577]

We also have evidence that the older Sunni view which saw the ʿAbbasid caliphate as the only legitimate institution exercising power persisted largely unchanged in the late Mamluk period up to, and including, al-Ghawrī's lifetime. The writings of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī are a case in point here. In contrast to the other sources examined in this chapter, al-Suyūṭī's works on the topic have recently received considerable scholarly attention and therefore we can limit ourselves to a brief recapitulation of key findings in the available secondary literature. It would be an understatement so say that al-Suyūṭī, who was on close terms with several ʿAbbasids of his time[578] but concomitantly stood

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574   Hassan, *Longing* 122. See also Hassan, *Longing* 119–20; Khalidi, *Thought* 196; Weintritt, *Formen* 194; Martel-Thoumian, Gouvernement 234, 253, 313; Mauder, Stance 90–1.

575   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 444–7, 475–6.

576   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vi, 9.

577   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* ii, 567–605, demonstrates that al-Qalqashandī's understanding of the caliphate was meaningful to later authors, too.

578   Hassan, *Longing* 136–7; See also Banister, Casting 102; Garcin, Histoire 34–7, 65–6.

in conflict with several Mamluk rulers,[579] held the caliphate and its holders
in special esteem. As Mustafa Banister showed, al-Suyūṭī attributed a "cosmic
role" to the ʿAbbasid caliphate:[580] The continued existence of the caliphate was
central to the maintenance of the natural order of the world, and any infringe-
ment on the caliph's traditional rights could have far-reaching consequences
for humankind and the entire world, because he enjoyed a special relationship
with God, who allowed the created world to prosper through his existence.[581]
For al-Suyūṭī, the transferral of the caliphate to Cairo made it the center of
the Islamic community.[582] Concomitantly, the author regarded the takeover
of caliphal prerogatives by Mamluk sultans as acts of usurpation and in his
historic works he condemned those Mamluk rulers whom he considered lack-
ing in respect for the caliphate.[583] Moreover, unlike al-Qalaqashandī, al-Suyūṭī
maintained the view that the caliphs of his time were free to delegate their
powers to whomever they wished.[584] A "staunch traditionalist,"[585] al-Suyūṭī
regarded the caliphate—which he considered the exclusive prerogative of the
Quraysh and the ʿAbbasids more specifically[586]—as the guarantor of legit-
imate political rule.[587] His writings on the topic were expressive testimonies
that scholarly circles of al-Ghawrī's time could and indeed still regarded the
ʿAbbasid caliphs as supreme, fully sovereign, and divinely supported rulers of
the Muslim community.[588]

A study of al-Ghawrī's reign relying only on chronicles, inscriptions, and
codicological evidence would lead to the conclusion that the established late
Mamluk system of caliphal-sultanic rule—whether it was conceptualized as
coexistence between the caliphate and a legitimate *imārat al-istīlāʾ-cum-wizā-
rat al-tafwīḍ* sultanate as outlined by al-Qalqashandī or as the result of the
caliphs' free and voluntary delegation of their powers to candidates for the
sultanate—persisted largely unchanged under the penultimate Mamluk ruler.
Al-Ghawrī's library included a Turkic adaptation of al-Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām*

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579   Mauder, Stance 81–2 (with references to older literature).

580   Banister, Casting 98.

581   Banister, Casting 100–102, 104.

582   Banister, Casting 103–4.

583   Banister, Casting 100, 104–6.

584   Banister, Casting 108–10. See also Sartain, *Biography* 92–3. On al-Suyūṭī's view of the sul-
       tanate, see Mauder, Stance.

585   Banister, Casting 108.

586   Hassan, *Longing* 138–41. See also Arazi and Elʿad, al-Ināfa.

587   Banister, Casting 109. See also Geoffroy, al-Suyūṭī 914; Garcin, Histoire 50, 66.

588   On the question of Qurashī origin and the caliphate in Mamluk historiography, see also
       Cobb, Hashimism.

al-sulṭāniyya, which was apparently still considered relevant at al-Ghawrī's court.[589] The anonymous work *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* produced for the sultan not only lists all ʿAbbasid caliphs who resided in Cairo, but also includes a prayer for the continuation of the caliphate.[590] Furthermore, although we know of only one text referring to al-Ghawrī as *qasīm amīr al-muʾminīn*,[591] Ibn Iyās paints the picture of a fairly normal relationship between the sultan and the caliphs of his time: Al-Ghawrī received a proper investiture by the caliph al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh Yaʿqūb (r. 903–14/1497–1508), who swore the *bayʿa* to him and joined his inauguration parade.[592] Afterward, al-Mustamsik paid regular courtesy visits to al-Ghawrī at the beginning of every month.[593] Moreover, the caliph attended a limited number of courtly events, together with the chief judges, but otherwise did not interact much with the sultan.[594]

At the beginning of Shaʿbān 914/December 1508, al-Ghawrī's only more profound involvement in the affairs of the caliphate prior to his last Syrian campaign took place when a nephew of al-Mustamsik confronted the caliph, in the sultan's presence, and accused his uncle of no longer being qualified for his office because he had gone blind. As noted above, sight was considered a necessary qualification for the caliphate. Al-Mustamsik's son Muḥammad then declared that his cousin, who had attacked his father, was also not qualified for the caliphate because he had a speech defect that prevented him from pronouncing the Quran correctly. When the truth of this accusation was ascertained, al-Ghawrī dissolved the meeting and ordered the chief judges, the caliph, his son, and his nephew to meet him again after some time.[595]

When the group reconvened a few days later, al-Mustamsik had prepared a document designating his son Muḥammad as his successor. After the Shāfiʿī chief judge had ascertained the validity of this transaction, the sultan accepted al-Mustamsik's abdication, declared Muḥammad the new caliph, and instructed the latter's new position to be recorded by the *kātib al-sirr* with the chief judges acting as witnesses. Ibn Iyās' account is somewhat ambiguous, but it seems that all parties involved considered the sultan's declaration of Muḥammad's caliphate—and not his father's designation—as the decisive legal act that validated Muḥammad's new position as caliph al-Mutawakkil ʿalā Llāh III.

589   Brockelmann, *Geschichte* i, 483.

590   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 160ᵛ–161.

591   Qurqūt, *al-Wathāʾiq* 136. Baumgarten, Travels 370, lists "Caliph's vice-gerent [*sic*]" among al-Ghawrī's titles, which might represent a translation of *qasīm amīr al-muʾminīn*.

592   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 4, 7. See also Petry, *Twilight* 129.

593   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 139.

594   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 52, 58, 89. See also Petry, *Twilight* 134, 168.

595   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 139.

After receiving a robe of honor from the sultan, al-Mutawakkil III took posses-sion of the insignia (*shiʿār*) of his office and confirmed, with the chief judges again acting as witnesses, that he delegated his authority to Sultan al-Ghawrī in the same way his father had.[596]

Ibn Iyās noted that people praised al-Ghawrī for his handling of this affair, since he had respected Muḥammad b. al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh Yaʿqūb's rightful claim to the caliphate and did not bestow it on his cousin who had offered a considerable sum of money in exchange for his appointment to the position.[597] Indeed, the transition of the office was performed in a way that respected the interests of all parties involved—apart, of course, from al-Mutawakkil III's cousin who had initiated the change.[598] In the following years, interactions between the sultan and the new caliph took place along customary lines, with al-Mutawakkil III paying his traditional visits to the sultan, participating in a few selected courtly events, but apart from that remaining largely out of Mam-luk politics.[599] Sometimes, the sultan sent the caliph gifts that, in at least one case came with a request to pray for him during an illness.[600] Moreover, in 918/1512, an envoy from Gujarat arrived requesting caliphal investiture for his ruler.[601]

Al-Mutawakkil III acquired a more prominent role in Ibn Iyās' narrative after al-Ghawrī informed the caliph in early 922/1516 that he expected him to accompany the sultan's army on its march to Syria.[602] As seen above, it was not unusual for a caliph to escort a sultan if the latter left Cairo. Yet, Ibn Iyās suggests that al-Mutawakkil III was not happy about having to travel to Syria, especially as the sultan initially refused to allocate him the customary travel allowance—a move that Ibn Iyās strongly criticized as a deviation from proper sultanic behavior.[603] Ultimately, al-Mutawakkil III joined the march to Syria as part of a group of religious and civilian officials.[604] In Aleppo, the caliph led the troops in prayer and later accompanied them to the battlefield in an attempt to secure divine support.[605]

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596   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 140. See also Schimmel, Kalif 18. On sultanic robes of honor given to caliphs, see Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 219–20; Diem, *Kleid* 52, 61–2.

597   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 140–1.

598   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 140–1.

599   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 318, 338, 347, 355, 379, 390; v, 6, 23, 25, 31.

600   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 322–4.

601   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 287. See also Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 113.

602   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 15. See also Petry, *Twilight* 215.

603   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 15, 23, 30, 33. See also Schimmel, Glimpses 355; Schimmel, Kalif 21.

604   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 47. See also Petry, *Twilight* 219.

605   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 63, 68. See also Petry, *Twilight* 224.

After the Mamluk defeat and al-Ghawrī's death, the caliph retreated to Aleppo, where he fell into Sultan Selīm's hands. The latter treated al-Mutawakkil III with deference, bestowed gifts on him, and even promised to return him to Baghdad, the seat of his forefathers, then placed him under house arrest.[606] Subsequently, the caliph accompanied Selīm to Cairo, where he assisted the Ottomans in establishing order following the conquest. He was then brought to Istanbul, together with many Mamluk officials. Later, he was allowed to return to Egypt, where he died in 945/1539.[607]

In sum, Ibn Iyās' chronicle suggests that al-Ghawrī's relationship with the two caliphs during his reign was rather typical by late Mamluk standards. Two other sources complicate this picture slightly, but do not change it entirely: First, several inscriptions on buildings and objects refer to al-Ghawrī with the (originally) caliphal title of *imām*, typically in the form *al-imām al-aʿẓam* (the grand *imām*).[608] However, as we saw, the application of the title of *imām* to Mamluk sultans was not unheard of; many inscriptions corroborate its use by earlier Mamluk rulers.[609] Thus, it seems that by referring to al-Ghawrī as *imām*, the vocabulary of inscriptions from the sultan's reign followed established conventions. Second, in his obituary of al-Ghawrī, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī prayed to God that the Merciful "shall place him [that is, al-Ghawrī] among the *rāshidūn* caliphs and the just *imām*s."[610] However, the context makes it clear that the chronicler was not describing the political status quo of the late Mamluk period in this passage, but was, rather, articulating a hope for al-Ghawrī's fate in the hereafter.[611]

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606   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 74, 77. See also Petry, *Twilight* 229; Schimmel, Glimpses 355; Schimmel, Kalif 25; Becker, Studien 396–400; Arnold, *Caliphate* 140; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 164. On the caliph in the Ottoman camp, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 32.

607   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 147, 150, 157–8, 183–5, 192; Tezcan, Hanafism 71 (for return and date of death). See also Banister, Revisiting 235–7; Holt, Observations 507; Winter, Occupation 506; Schimmel, Glimpses 355; Schimmel, Kalif 27; Weil, *Egypten* ii, 434–5; Arnold, *Caliphate* 141–2.

608   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 12122, 13552, 13555, 13608, 21269; ʿAbd al-Mālik, al-Naqsh 114; Wiet, *Cuivre* 37–8. Anonymous, *Waqfiyya* 882 q, 7 uses the same title. Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 28, likewise refers to al-Ghawrī as *imām*.

609   E.g., Thesaurus d'Épigraphie Islamique, nos. 9475, 10660, 10664, 10686, 10687, 11210, 11404, 11430, 11454, 11460, 11507, 11542, 11546, 12216, 12228, 13434, 13452, 13465, 13552, 33292. See also Arnold, *Caliphate* 118.

610   Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 287.

611   On the eschatological status of just *imām*s, see Rosenthal, Justice 96–7; Mauder, Stance 90; Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 28–31; and on the Mamluk understandings of the term *rāshidūn*, see Banister, Sword 11–2.

6.2.3.4   Sultanic and Caliphal Rule at al-Ghawrī's Court

One of the most remarkable features of the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* is the insights they provide into communicative practices among members of the sultan's court who envisioned the relationship between caliph and sultan in highly unusual and new ways. These innovative approaches to the caliphate and the sultanate at al-Ghawrī's court, while building on and contributing to the developments of Islamic political and legal thought outlined, were without known parallel or precedent in the Mamluk context.

One of the most outstanding aspects of these novel conceptualizations of caliphal and sultanic authority was the consistent and, in a Mamluk context unprecedented, application of titles to al-Ghawrī—titles that in the Mamluk Sultanate had always been the exclusive prerogatives of the ʿAbbasid caliphs. The authors of all three *majālis* accounts refer to al-Ghawrī at least once in their works as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn*.[612] *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* uses these titles ten[613] and nine[614] times for al-Ghawrī, respectively. Moreover, the text attributes to the sultan three additional honorifics with strong caliphal overtones: *khalīfat al-arḍ* (caliph of the Earth),[615] *khalīfat al-ḥaqq* (caliph of the truth),[616] and *imām al-muslimīn*.[617] The first of these honorifics brings to mind Q 2:30, where God tells the angels "I am putting a *khalīfa* on earth."[618] *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* uses *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* three times each for al-Ghawrī[619] and a further two times calls him *khalīfat al-arḍ*.[620] In *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, caliphal titles for al-Ghawrī feature more rarely, with *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* appearing one time each and *al-imām al-aʿẓam* twice.[621]

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612   There is no evidence in any other source that these titles were applied to al-Ghawrī.

613   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2, 5, 108, 118, 143, 171, 174, 202, 228, 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1, 4, 30, 38, 55, 66, 69, 87, 108, 145. See also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109.

614   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 2–3, 5, 108, 118, 143, 171, 174, 228, 268; (ed. ʿAzzām) 1, 4, 30, 38, 55, 66, 69, 108, 145.

615   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 108; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38. On this Quranic notion of *khalīfa*, see Paret, Signification 214–5; Marsham, Caliph 13–19, 26.

616   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 118; (ed. ʿAzzām) 38. Since *al-Ḥaqq* is one of God's names, this title could also be translated as "deputy of God." On this title, see also Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 122.

617   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 202; (ed. ʿAzzām) 87.

618   Trans. Abdel Haleem, slightly modified.

619   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 2ᵛ; ii, fols. 1ᵛ, 107ᵛ (both titles). See also Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 148; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 109–10.

620   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 2ᵛ; ii, fol. 107ᵛ.

621   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 3, 84; (ed. ʿAzzām) 2, 84.

With a single exception from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*,[622] these titles only appear in passages that are clearly marked as not directly traceable to the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, but as conveying the voice of the authors of the texts, for example, in their introductory and concluding sections. This might be interpreted as suggesting that the authors of the *majālis* accounts employed caliphal titles merely to flatter al-Ghawrī and that their application was not based on profound theoretical reflections.

There are at least two important counterarguments to this position. First, while present-day readers might be accustomed to the idea that forms of address such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* might be "only titles," in premodern Islamicate societies, they constituted "a form of political communication"[623] and "interventions in discourse—arguments in a contest—and not statements of 'fact,'"[624] as Andrew Marsham recently noted. Thus, titles carried communicative meaning and should not be passed over as mere words, but deserve to be taken seriously as trenchant expressions of political visions and models.[625]

Second, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* include multiple passages in which members of the sultan's court society engage in thorough debates about the relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate, and these debates can be understood as the background of the unique (in the Mamluk context) application of caliphal titles to al-Ghawrī. While these passages claim to convey the voices of those in the *majālis*, and not necessarily the authors of the accounts, arguably, they constitute justifications for the authorial use of titles such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* for al-Ghawrī. A case in point is the following debate in *al-Kawkab al-durrī*:

> **Question:** "Is it allowed or not [allowed] to call a ruler (*malik*) *khalīfat Allāh*?" This question occurred because the Safawid [ruler] had sent [a book about] the history of the Tatars (*tārīkh al-Tatar*) to His Excellency, our lord the sultan. In its biography of Khān Shāhīn Bek, [the latter was called] *khalīfat al-Raḥmān*.
>
> **Answer:** "The author of *al-Anwār* said: 'It is allowed to call a ruler *amīr al-muʾminīn* or *khalīfat al-rasūl*, but not *khalīfat Allāh* or *khalīfat al-Raḥmān*.'"[626]

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622 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 174; (ed. ʿAzzām) 69.
623 Marsham, Caliph 8.
624 Marsham, Caliph 9.
625 See also section 3.5 above.
626 Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 73. See also Irwin, Thinking 47.

This passage provides rare evidence of the circulation of scholarly writings across the Mamluk-Safawid frontier, possibly as part of diplomatic exchanges.[627] Moreover, it bears witness to a conversation about whether a worldly ruler (*malik*) could be referred to as *khalīfat Allāh*, as had been the case with the Özbek ruler Muḥammad Shaybānī Khān, also known as Shāhī Bek Khān (r. 906–16/1500–10). Numismatic and textual evidence indicates that Muḥammad Shaybānī Khān laid claim to the honorifics *imām al-zamān* and *khalīfat al-Raḥmān*. No explicit theoretical justification of Shaybānī Khān's use of these titles dating to his lifetime is preserved, but their application seems to have been intended to improve his position vis-à-vis his Timurid and Safawid rivals.[628]

In al-Ghawrī's *majlis*, Shaybānī Khān's claim to the title of *khalīfat Allāh* was seen as problematic, at least by the unnamed interlocutor answering the question. Though it is not clear on which work he relied in his reply,[629] the interlocutor upheld the widely shared Sunni position that the title *khalīfat Allāh*—and hence also the title *khalīfat al-Raḥmān*[630] that was just a replacement of the word *Allāh* with another name of God—must not be used, whereas the titles *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* were acceptable.

Yet, in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* the unnamed interlocutor only advocated the Sunni standard position prima facie, because Sunni jurists such as al-Māwardī had only applied the titles of *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* to rulers who, as *imām*s, were the supreme and lawfully invested leaders of the Muslim polity. However, by stating that these titles could be employed for local military rulers, such as an Özbek *malik*, the unnamed interlocutor was suggesting something at variance with the teachings of the Sunni legal authorities of his time. Moreover, since titulature was one of the most basic forms of expressing differences in status, the opinion that a local military ruler could bear the titles *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* also called into question the

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627   On the circulation of historical works across the Mamluk-Ottoman frontier, see Al-Tikriti, *Korkud* 263; and on Safawid gifts to al-Ghawrī, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 31.

628   Von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 298–9. See also Becker, *Studien* 381; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 37; Peirce, *Harem* 161; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 243; Arnold, *Caliphate* 118; Black, *History* 189; Ott, *Transoxanien* 52, 61, 188; Veinstein, Origines 31. On the Timurids' practice of using Chingizid puppet rulers to bolster their legitimacy in a way that is structurally comparable to the Mamluks' maintenance of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in Cairo, see, e.g., Manz, Timurids; Manz, *Power* 9–10, 21; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 155, 157.

629   I was not able to identify the work quoted.

630   On *khalīfat al-Raḥmān* as a title of the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad, see Drews, *Karolinger* 167; of Āq Qoyunlu rulers, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 240–2, 249; and in Ottoman contexts, see Markiewicz, *Crisis* 228, 242, 257–84; Yılmaz, *Caliphate*, passim.

entire established relationship between caliphs and other rulers, such as sultans. This applied especially to the Mamluk context, in which the caliph and sultan almost literally lived next door to each other.

There is further evidence that members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* reassessed the established Mamluk view about the caliphate in general and sultanic-caliphal relations in particular, although the accounts of the *majālis* debates about the caliphate do not present a uniform understanding of its history, significance, and status. Rather, our sources indicate that several in part overlapping, in part mutually exclusive discourses about the caliphate were known at al-Ghawrī's court. While hardly any of these discourses is completely in line with what could be referred to as the customary late Mamluk conceptualization of the sultan-caliph relationship, some of them explain how members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the authors of the *majālis* accounts, could consider the application of honorifics such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* to non-Qurashī rulers justified.

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya exhibits a rather coherent understanding of the caliphate and its history. In a clearly Sunni interpretation of history, the text narrates how Abū Bakr received the *bayʿa* from the Muslim community after the Prophet's death[631] as the first in a long and uninterrupted chain of lawfully appointed caliphs who, since the time of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb also bore the title *amīr al-muʾminīn*.[632] The reigns of the first five caliphs, including al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī[633] as well as those of their Umayyad and ʿAbbasid successors up to al-Mustaʿṣim bi-Llāh (r. 640–56/1242–58), are explicitly referred to as *khilāfa*. However, the author of the work attributes a somewhat higher status to the first five caliphs by dealing with their reigns in his section on prophetic history, while relegating all others to the part on "rulers (*mulūk*) and sultans."[634]

When the account reaches al-Mustaʿṣim bi-Llāh, the last ʿAbbasid ruler of Baghdad, we read: "After the killing of al-Mustaʿṣim, the caliphate came to an end in the world. Al-Mustaʿṣim had been busy playing with pigeons and was absolutely not qualified for the caliphate."[635] Thus, apparently, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* held the view that the caliphate, as a worldly office, came to a definitive end when the Mongols conquered Baghdad. Consequently, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* does not mention a word about the reestablishment of the ʿAbbasid caliphate under Baybars. Moreover, after al-Mustaʿṣim's death,

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631 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 57ʳ.
632 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 60ʳ.
633 Cf. section 3.1.3.2 above.
634 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 66ᵛ.
635 Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 40ʳ–40ᵛ.

the history of the Muslim community is no longer structured as a series of caliphal reigns, but as a sequence of tenures of Mamluk sultans. Thus, in his account of the investiture of Sultan Barqūq when the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* mentions in passing the existence of a caliph, it seems like a slip of the pen.[636] Apart from this fleeting reference, the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* clearly sees the post-Mongol Islamicate world as bereft of caliphs continuing the tradition of the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad—in Mamluk historiography, this is a rare position that is incompatible with the widely-shared understanding that the ʿAbbasid caliphate continued to exist in Cairo. In the view of the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, when al-Mustaʿṣim bi-Llāh died, the ʿAbbasid caliphate died with him. Hence, the application of caliphal titles to al-Ghawrī was not problematic, given that these honorifics had lost their original significance with the end of the caliphate as a functioning political office.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī features traces of a similar and equally coherent understanding of the caliphate. Like *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, the pertinent material in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* leads readers to the conclusion that its author and—given that the work claims to be based on the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*—probably also other members of the sultan's court viewed the caliphate in a narrow sense as a defunct relic of a distant past. Hence, it was acceptable to apply former caliphal titles without much problem for contemporaneous rulers—a view that was explicitly endorsed in the passage from the work about the Özbek ruler discussed above.

However, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* identify different endpoints of the functioning of the caliphate. While the author of *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* assumes an uninterrupted history of caliphal rule up to 656/1258, material in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* limits its existence to just thirty years, on the basis of a *ḥadīth* included in Abū Dāwūd's collection in the following version: "The Messenger of God said: 'The caliphate of prophecy will last for thirty years. Then, God will give rule (*mulk*) to whom He wills.'"[637]

Al-Kawkab al-durrī mentions the interpretation of Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna, the grandfather of the late Mamluk Ḥanafī chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, of this tradition as follows: "Muʿāwiya [b. Abī Sufyān] did not belong to the caliphs, as it has been transmitted, 'The caliphate will last after me [that is, the Prophet Muḥammad] for thirty years.'[638] The caliphate

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636   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fol. 42ʳ.
637   Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, Kitāb al-Sunna*, no. 4647.
638   For a similar version of this tradition, see al-Tirmidhī *Sunan, Kitāb al-Fitan*, no. 2226.

thus came to its end (*tammat*) with ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him."[639] In another passage, an unnamed *majālis* participant inquires about the status that certain individuals enjoy with God. Among others, he asks about "the four caliphs"[640]—a term which clearly refers here to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī. Although less clear than the preceding quotation, this question again might suggest that members of al-Ghawrī's court opined that the caliphate had ended with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

While there is evidence that the tradition about the caliphate lasting thirty years was originally not meant to be read literally, but rather to defend the status of all four "rightly-guided" caliphs among proto-Sunnis,[641] later scholars understood the *ḥadīth*, at least at times, in its literal sense. Mamluk scholars argued that according to the Prophet's words, the caliphate was, in the strict sense, no longer extant in their time; thus, they implicitly justified political rule lacking caliphal endorsement.[642] It seems that the anonymous interlocutors quoted in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* shared this understanding of the tradition and thus implicitly contended that the ʿAbbasid caliphate in Cairo was not genuine, and therefore, it was acceptable to use its traditional titles for other rulers.

Thus, whereas *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and the pertinent material in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* advocate largely coherent visions of the caliphate that entail similar conclusions about its current status, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* bears witness to at least two different conceptualizations of the caliphate that are difficult to reconcile with the approaches in the other *majālis* sources and the customary late Mamluk position.

The first of these conceptualizations straightforwardly casts al-Ghawrī in the role of *khalīfat al-muslimīn* and *amīr al-muʾminīn*. This is most visible at the very beginning and the very end of the work when al-Sharīf, in his capacity as author, refers to the sultan explicitly with these and related titles. Moreover, in one passage that forms part of the account of the proceedings of the *majālis* proper, the titles *khalīfat al-muslimīn* and *amīr al-muʾminīn* are applied to al-Ghawrī.[643] This suggests that the sultan was addressed in this form not only in textual communication, but also orally during his salons. The fact that *Nafāʾis*

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639   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 206; (ed. ʿAzzām) 70.

640   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 274.

641   Zaman, *Religion* 170–3. On the tradition, see also, e.g., Madelung, Imāma 1164; Lambton, <u>Kh</u>alīfa 948; Khalidi, *Thought* 198–9; al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 12–3; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 445–6; Gibb, Considerations 404–5; Margoliouth, Sense 327–8; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 138ᵛ–139ʳ.

642   See, e.g., Masters, *Arabs* 53.

643   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 174; (ed. ʿAzzām) 69.

majālis al-sulṭāniyya attributes the use of these appellations for the sultan dur-
ing a *majlis* to its first-person narrator suggests that al-Sharīf was among the
driving forces behind the application of caliphal titles to al-Ghawrī.

In one of the *khātima* sections of his work, al-Sharīf provides a theoretical
explanation for why this extension of sultanic titulature is appropriate and
legitimate:

> King Afrīdūn said: "The sultan must be of perfect inborn disposition, of
> great power and strength, with a loud voice because he [must] strike ter-
> ror in [people's] souls, [and he must be] tall and have sound limbs and
> senses." […]
>
> This is in accordance with the radiant *sharīʿa* of Muḥammad—blessing
> and peace be upon him—, for it is said: "The requirement[s] for the *imām*
> are that he is of sound mind, of legal age, a Muslim, free, male, a *muj-
> tahid*, brave, of sound judgment, able, hearing, seeing, speaking, with
> sound limbs, and a Qurashī. If no Qurashī can be found who fulfills the
> requirements, then [the *imām* must be] a Kinānī. If [no Kinānī fulfilling
> the requirements] can be found, then [the *imām* must be] from among
> the descendants of Ishmael. If [no descendant of Ishmael fulfilling the
> requirements] can be found, then one of the Persians who fulfills the
> requirements or anyone [else] from among the descendants of Isaac is
> [to be] appointed."
>
> Praise and glory be to God! The Circassians originate from the sons
> of Isaac, and all of these requirements are present in the greatest sul-
> tan, the grand caliph, the support of the sultans of the provinces [of the
> world] who is deservedly the example of [all] rulers, the one who reveals
> the secrets of [the Quranic verse] "We made you successors (*khalāʾif*) on
> Earth"[644] [Q 10:14], the sultan of the seven climes in their entirety, the *amīr
> al-muʾminīn*, the *khalīfat al-muslimīn* al-Malik al-Ashraf, the overlord of
> Egypt Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.[645]

In this passage, al-Sharīf first showed that al-Ghawrī, who was referred to as
shāhānshāh in his correspondence, fulfilled the qualifications of a worthy suc-
cessor of the ancient tradition of Iranian kingship, here personified by King
Afrīdūn of the *Shāhnāme*. Second, he argued that al-Ghawrī also met the
requirements that Muslim jurisprudents had formulated for the office of *imām*.

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644   My translation.
645   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 227–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 107–8. See also Irwin, Thinking 44; Irwin, Cir-
        cassian 116 (where this statement is erroneously attributed to al-Ghawrī himself).

Third, the passage indicated—although in a rather superficial manner—that the conditions for supreme political authority formulated by the Persian political tradition and Islamic law were congruent. Finally, the author stressed his point that al-Ghawrī, in fulfilling both sets of stipulations, was the supreme ruler according to the Persian tradition and the Commander of the Believers as outlined in Muslim political thought.

The list of conditions that al-Sharīf enumerates for the position of *imām* shows his familiarity with the pertinent Islamic legal discourse in the tradition of al-Māwardī. His catalog of requirements is particularly similar to late Mamluk examples, such as that of al-Qalqashandī. All but one of al-Qalqashandī's requirements are also listed in al-Sharīf's *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, with probity being replaced with ability (*kafāʾa*) and the status of a *mujtahid*.[646] While we already encountered the former condition above, the far-reaching claim that the *imām* must be able to serve as a *mujtahid* reflects the widely-shared conviction that he must be knowledgeable in law. Unfortunately, our source fails to specify its understanding of what is entailed in the rank of *mujtahid*.[647]

With the exception of Qurashī descent, it was probably not difficult for al-Sharīf to argue that al-Ghawrī was qualified as *imām*. The sultan was a Muslim male of sound mind and legal age, able to hear, see, and speak, and not suffering from any physical handicaps. His political experience also suggested that the sultan was of sound judgment and able to function as leader, while his record of military activities could be evidence of his bravery. Moreover, although the sultan had been a slave in his youth, he was later manumitted and thus, according to the view of most jurists, free in the legal sense. Finally, the sultan's legal competence, demonstrated in numerous *majālis* discussions, could be seen as indicating that his knowledge was equal to that of a *mujtahid*.

Al-Sharīf only deals with the requirement of Qurashī decent in more detail, thereby following a line of legal thought we also find in al-Qalqashandī. He states that if no qualified candidate is available, the condition of Qurashī lineage should not be waived completely, rather it can be broadened to include those originating from the tribal group of Kinān, and then further to kinship with Abraham's son Ishmael. Unlike al-Qalqashandī, al-Sharīf sees people originating from Isaac, Abraham's other son, as the fourth best candidates

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646   The frequent accusations of injustice levied against al-Ghawrī may have played a role in al-Sharīf's dropping of probity.

647   On the Mamluk understanding of the notion that the *imām* must be a *mujtahid*, see Hassan, *Longing* 137–8.

for the imamate—a condition fulfilled by Persians, whom some Islamicate genealogists regarded as among Isaac's descendants,[648] and by other ethnic groups including, according to al-Sharīf, the Circassians to whom al-Ghawrī belonged.[649] Accordingly, the sultan was fully qualified as rightful *imām*, provided no member of one of the three more preferable groups fulfilling the other requirements was available—a fact that al-Sharīf seems to have understood as self-evident.

Remarkably, al-Sharīf's argument that al-Ghawrī belonged to this fourth category was incompatible with the attempt in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* to establish the Ghassanids as forefathers of the Circassians, as discussed above.[650] According to the genealogy proposed in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the Circassians, as Ghassanid descendants, were still not Kinānīs, but like all Arabs were from the offspring of Ishmael. Hence, if al-Sharīf had referred to his earlier passage about the Circassians' Ghassanid origin, he could easily have presented al-Ghawrī as an even more qualified candidate for the imamate. It is difficult to explain why he did not take this step, but it seems plausible that the story about the Circassians' origin from a fugitive Arab leader was not accepted by all members of al-Ghawrī's court, possibly not even by al-Sharīf himself.

Even without reference to this story, al-Sharīf was able to establish that al-Ghawrī was the rightful *imām* of the Muslim community, someone who met all necessary qualifications. Hence, the application of titles such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* was fully justified, even when viewed from a strictly legal perspective. Al-Sharīf's engagement with the legal discourse in al-Māwardī's tradition demonstrates the continued relevance of this specific type of Islamic jurisprudential thought at the late Mamluk court. However, its reception took on a new form and paved the way for a novel understanding and creative reconceptualization of the institution of the caliphate, one that, as argued in more detail below, met the needs of the Mamluk political elite for legitimation in a time when the transregional political system was experiencing rapid changes.

However, such a reconceptualization, which not only implicated the de facto, but also the de jure merger of the institutions of the sultanate and the caliphate, faced a serious problem in the Mamluk context: In Cairo, there was already a person whom many Sunnis near and far recognized as the rightful *imām*, namely the ʿAbbasid caliph. How did those members of al-Ghawrī's

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648   Savant, Genealogy 117, 119–20, 126; Savant, *Muslims* 40, 43, 47–54; Savant, Isaac. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Persia* 42–3.
649   See also Conermann and Haarmann, Herrscherwechsel 219.
650   Cf. section 6.2.2 above.

court who sought to cast the sultan in the role of Commander of the Believers address what must have constituted a significant obstacle to their plans?

Two sections from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* provide at least partial answers to this question. One amounts to a long account of a multi-session discussion in the sultan's salon, while the other is a short passage in the description of the celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet. Both take as their point of reference a rather traditional conceptualization of the relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate, a conceptualization that comes very close to the customary late Mamluk model outlined above.

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya narrates the beginning of the multi-session discussion as follows:

> **Tenth *majlis***
> I went up [to the citadel] on Tuesday, the 28th Jumādā II [911].[651] [The participants] sat in the Duhaysha for 40 *darajas*,[652] and the *imām* was *shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn. In [this *majlis*], there were questions [for discussion].
>
> **First question:** Our lord the sultan said: "If the sultan is present at a funeral, who is most entitled to the leadership (*imāma*) of the prayer?"
>
> **Answer:** I said: "The sultan, according to the school of Abū Ḥanīfa, the earlier doctrine of al-Shāfiʿī, Mālik, and Aḥmad—may God have mercy on them."
>
> **Second question:** "Who thereafter?"
>
> **Answer:** I said: "The judge."
>
> Umm Abū l-Ḥasan said: "The first one is the caliph."
>
> I said: "The word (*ism*)[653] 'caliph' is not mentioned in the books of *fiqh*."
>
> Umm Abū l-Ḥasan said: "The marriage contracts of the Muslims are not valid (*lā yaṣiḥḥu*) in lands whose sultans do not wear a robe [of investiture] (*khilʿa*) of the caliph, and their children are bastards (*awlād al-zinā*)."
>
> I said: "Accordingly, the children of the lands of Anatolia, the West (*al-gharb*),[654] the non-Arabs [of the eastern lands] (*al-ʿajam*) and the Yemen would be all bastards, since their sultans do not wear a robe [of investiture] of the caliph at all."
>
> **Haughtiness (*mukābara*):** It was said: "What is right at all in the land of the non-Arabs, such that their sultans could be right, too?"[655]

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651 Corresponding to 26 November 1505.

652 This equals two hours and forty minutes.

653 Cf. Lane, *Lexicon* iv, 1435.

654 The manuscript clearly has *al-gharb* and not, as indicated by ʿAzzām, *al-ʿarab*.

655 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 220–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 100–1. On these and the following passages, see also Irwin, Thinking 46–7.

In al-Sharīf's account, the sultan begins this exchange with—despite the use of the ambiguous term *imāma*—a rather inconspicuous question: Who should lead the funeral prayer if a sultan is present? The first-person narrator replied that according to all four Sunni schools of law, the sultan should lead the prayer in such a situation, and that if no sultan is present, a judge should take over. In his answer, al-Sharīf quoted more or less verbatim the pertinent stipulations in Mamluk *fiqh* textbooks. In al-Marghīnānī's *al-Hidāya*, the section "On the prayer over the dead" begins as follows:

> The most entitled of the people to pray over the dead is the sultan if he is present, because preceding him [in prayer] would entail disparagement. If he is not present, then the judge [is most entitled], because he holds authority. If he is not present, then the *imām* [who used to lead the dead person in prayer] during [his] life [is most entitled], because [the dead person] was pleased with him when he was alive.[656]

There is evidence that this question was not only of theoretical interest to al-Ghawrī, given that he sometimes attended the funerals of high-ranking members of his court society, together with other leading functionaries of the realm, such as the ʿAbbasid caliph, the chief judges, and the commanders of the army.[657] It seems plausible that by bringing up the question about the funeral prayer in his *majālis*, the sultan wanted to ensure that everyone involved knew that in such a situation, he was legally entitled to perform his supreme position by leading the Muslims in prayer.

Yet, the jester Umm Abū l-Ḥasan[658] objected and argued that the caliph—and not the sultan—had the right to function as the prayer leader. This position was not unfounded, given that Islamic law considered the *imām*, in his capacity as political leader, generally most qualified to lead congregational prayers.[659] In stating that the caliph preceded the sultan in leading the prayer, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan identified the caliphs of his time with the *imām*s of the legal discourse and upheld their prerogatives. Al-Sharīf's objection to this argument that the term "caliph" did not appear in *fiqh* works can be interpreted in two ways: Either he wanted to point out that literally, the word "caliph" was not found in the relevant sections of books of law, as in the passage from *al-Hidāya* given

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656   Al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāya* ii, 143.

657   See, e.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 398. On funerals as events that confirm status, see also Barker, *Legitimating* 56–7, 76.

658   On him, see section 4.1.2.4 above.

659   Katz, *Prayer* 139.

above, or he acknowledged that the legal tradition saw the political *imām* as most entitled to leadership in prayer, but highlighted that this very legal tradition usually did not speak of the "caliph" but only of the *imām*, who, as we have seen, in Mamluk times was often identified with the sultan. Regardless of which reading is closer to al-Sharīf's intended meaning, he was clearly trying to counter Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's attempts to elevate the caliph's rank over that of the sultan.

Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, however, not only made a point about a specific aspect of Muslim religious practice; in fact, his view had much broader implications, as is evident from his next statement. In line with earlier jurists who, as noted, had underlined the need to maintain the caliphate and to have local rulers properly invested, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan argued that legal transactions were only valid in lands that had a lawfully appointed ruler. Taking the example of marriage contracts as a case in point, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan opined that all children born in territories not ruled by caliphally appointed leaders were illegitimate.

Al-Sharīf hailed from a region that was not ruled by a caliphal deputy and thus was personally affected by Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's statement.[660] In his objection, he spelled out the far-reaching ramifications of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's view, but was then ridiculed by an unnamed *majālis* participant who doubted that anything could be correct in his home region at all. Al-Sharīf's reaction to this mockery amounted to a full-fledged attack on the relevance and, implicitly also, the legitimacy of the ʿAbbasid caliphate of Cairo:

> **Answer:** I said: "Who said that these are caliphs, and who appointed them?"
>
> **Narration (*ḥikāya*):** "Forty years ago, the caliph of Egypt (*khalīfat Miṣr*) sent a robe to the sultan of the non-Arabs Jahānshāh. The envoy remained at his gate for six months. Then he was brought to the attention of the sultan. When the envoy had entered and spoken about the affair of the robe, the ruler said: 'If you were not a foreigner, I would cut out your tongue.' Then he said: 'You, wear the robe of your caliph!' Then, [Jahānshāh] gave [the envoy] 300 *dīnār*s and said: 'I do not give you this pocket change (*fulūs*) because of the robe, I give it to you because you have come to our noble gates.' The *ʿulamāʾ* did not censure the sultan."
>
> **Narration (*ḥikāya*):** "The caliph of Egypt sent a robe to the lands of the Ottoman [ruler] for Sultan Muḥammad al-Rūmī. When [the envoy]

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660   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.

entered his high council (*majlisuhu al-ʿalī*) and spoke about the affair of the robe, the sultan said: 'I am the caliph of the Earth (*khalīfat al-arḍ*) and I should bestow robe[s] on all the sultans of the Earth.' Then, he cut the robe of the caliph to pieces and said: 'Is this little old man (*shuwaykh*) not ashamed to talk like this?!' He was furious for two days and the *ʿulamāʾ* of Anatolia did not censure him."[661]

The first-person narrator began his extended reply by asking who actually recognized the caliphs whose prerogatives Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was defending. He then narrated two stories about situations in which the ʿAbbasids of Cairo had sent robes of investiture to non-Mamluk rulers. In the first case, the robe was destined for Muẓaffar al-Dīn Jahānshāh b. Yūsuf (r. 841–72/1438–67), the political leader of the Qarā Qoyunlu from whose territories al-Sharīf apparently hailed.[662] While no dispatch of an official caliphal robe of investiture to this ruler is known from the Mamluk historiographical tradition, the first-person narrator's argument is clear: here Jahānshāh figured as an example of a ruler who not only lacked any interest in obtaining official caliphal investiture, but even considered the suggestion that he needed such legitimation an affront. Consequently, he rejected the robe and therewith also its sender's authority.[663] Yet, Jahānshāh is not presented as a bad ruler. He possessed the virtues of generosity and hospitality that were central to Islamicate conceptions of good governance during the middle period. Moreover, the scholars of his court who embodied religious authority did not rebuke him for his lack of respect for the caliphs of Cairo. Hence, the story suggests that without caliphal legitimation—or even when such legitimation is rejected outright—one could be an exemplary Muslim ruler.

The second, similar story conveyed a more far-reaching lesson. Here, the much admired Ottoman Sultan Meḥmed the Conqueror not only rebuffed the envoy sent to him with a caliphal robe, but also mocked either the ʿAbbasid caliph or his envoy as a "little old man" and had the robe completely destroyed. In addition, Meḥmed also claimed to be the caliph of the Earth. As such, he should invest other rulers, and did not require investiture by a person only referred to as the "caliph of Egypt."

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661   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 221–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 101–2.

662   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.

663   Rejecting a robe of honor implied that one was unwilling to accept its donor as superior, cf. Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḫilʿa* 203. See also Mayer, *Costume* 62; Diem, *Kleid* 65–6; Petry, Robing 356.

Again, there is no conclusive evidence from Mamluk chronicles that an ʿAbbasid of Cairo ever sent a robe of investiture to Meḥmed, though we do know that this and other Ottoman rulers laid claim to caliphal titulature and prerogatives. In 824/1421 at the latest, the clearly caliphal title "caliph of God"[664] was applied to Meḥmed I (r. 815–24/1413–21). Numerous of his successors, including Murād II,[665] Meḥmed the Conqueror,[666] Bāyezīd II,[667] Selīm the Grim,[668] Süleymān the Magnificent,[669] and Selīm II (r. 974–82/1566–74)[670] were referred to by or used the title *khalīfa/halīfe*.[671]

The Ottomans were not the only rulers laying claim to caliphal titles during the middle period. In the Maghrib, the Almohads, Hafsids, and Marinids employed *amīr al-muʾminīn* as one of their most important regal titles—a fact fully known to the Mamluks, given that al-Qalqashandī discussed and criticized this aspect of their titulature at length.[672] In the East, in addition to the Özbek ruler Muḥammad Shaybānī Khān mentioned above, rulers such as the Āq Qoyunlu leader Uzun Ḥasan (r. 857–82/1453–78)[673] and the Timurid Shāh Rukh (r.

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664   Imber, *Ebu's-suʿud* 103–4. See also Masters, *Arabs* 53; Veinstein, Origines 30. On an earlier, but less clear case, see Kennedy, *Caliphate* 342.

665   Fleischer, Learning 159.

666   Peirce, *Harem* 161–2. See also Fleischer, Wisdom 236; Goldziher, *Studien* ii, 62; Arnold, *Caliphate* 135–6; Veinstein, Origines 30–1.

667   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 242. See also Arnold, *Caliphate* 136; Veinstein, Origines 30.

668   Al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 2, 6; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 125; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*, fol. 1ᵛ. See also Holt, Structure 45–6; Conermann, Ibn Ṭūlūn 130; D'hulster, Caught 208; Fleischer, Lawgiver 162–3; Schimmel, Kalif 26; Al-Tikriti, Treatise 742, 746; Becker, Studien 391; Arnold, *Caliphate* 136–8; Çıpa, *Making* 215.

669   Imber, *Ebu's-suʿud* 98, 104–5; Imber, Myth 25. See also Fuess, Fini 405; Peirce, Family 111; Fetvacı, *Picturing* 173–4, 275; Black, *History* 208; Rietbergen, World 182.

670   Imber, Myth 25. See also Fetvacı, *Picturing* 3.

671   On the development of the Ottoman concept of the caliphate, see Yılmaz, *Caliphate*; Veinstein, Origines. The title *amīr al-muʾminīn* was not regularly applied to Ottoman rulers, cf. Marsham, Commander; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 181; Rietbergen, World 181. See, however, Holt, Offerings 14; Holt, Structure 46; al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 6; Gibb, Considerations 406–9.

672   Al-Qalqashandī, *Maʾāthir* i, 28; ii, 251–5, 258–9; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* v, 479. See also van Berchem, Titres; Wensinck, Amīr al-Muʾminīn; Marsham, Commander; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 313–33, 337; Sourdel, Khalīfa 943; Bosworth, Laḳab 626–7; Becker, Studien 362; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 166; Arnold, *Caliphate* 115–6; Bennison, Introduction 18, 20; Bennison, Drums 202–3; Buresi, Preparing 153, 159–64; Fierro and Cressier, Introduction 65–6. On Nasrid claims to the caliphate, see Bennison, Introduction 20; Ayalon, Transfer; Chapoutot-Remadi, Relations 530–2, 534.

673   Peirce, *Harem* 161. See also Lingwood, *Politics* 84; Woods, *Aqquyunlu* 117–8; Haarmann, Staat 355; Melvin-Koushki, Art 204–5; Lambton, Quis 146; Arnold, *Caliphate* 117–8; Veinstein, Origines 31.

807–50/1405–47)[674] likewise employed caliphal titulature, as did the Anatolian Aydinids.[675] Further examples include Muslim rulers in Africa south of the Sahara,[676] and the Delhi sultans.[677]

Al-Sharīf did not discuss these realities in detail, but rather employed the two emblematic anecdotes quoted above to indicate how much the transregional political situation had changed over the course of Mamluk history. For rulers such as the Ottoman sultans or the leaders of the Qarā Qoyunlu, it was no longer worthwhile to obtain caliphal investiture from the ʿAbbāsids of Cairo. Rather, they viewed themselves as entirely independent or they claimed caliphal status themselves. Under such conditions, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's argument that legal transactions were not valid in territories of rulers lacking proper caliphal appointment appears deeply anachronistic.

Still, according to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* Umm Abū l-Ḥasan continued to defend the legitimacy and significance of the ʿAbbāsids of Cairo with time-honored arguments also found in the juridical discourse:

> **Quarrel (*jadal*):** Umm Abū l-Ḥasan said: "What do you say about the *ḥadīth* of ʿAbbās: 'The caliphate belongs to you and to your children till the day of judgment.'?"
>
> **Answer:** It is said: "This *ḥadīth* is forged (*mawḍūʿ*), because if this *ḥadīth* were authentic, then why did Abū Bakr precede ʿAbbās—may God be pleased with both of them—because this is a designation (*naṣṣ*) for ʿAbbās?
>
> Moreover, if the caliphate were hereditary, then Abū Bakr's son would necessarily have been caliph after him, but the robe [of investiture] was bestowed on ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—may God be pleased with him.
>
> Furthermore, the Sunnis consider Abū Bakr, upon whom be peace, the true caliph after the Prophet, and the Shiʿis consider ʿAlī the caliph, and neither of the two parties raises questions regarding an [alleged] caliphate of ʿAbbās."
>
> **Third question:** "It is said that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, bequeathed (*waṣṣā*) the caliphate to Abū Bakr, then to ʿUmar, then to ʿUthmān, and then to ʿAlī—may God be pleased with all of them."

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674   Dekkiche, Source 268–9. See also Subtelny and Khalidov, Curriculum 211; Subtelny, *Timurids* 25; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 341; von Kügelgen, *Legitimierung* 299; Becker, Studien 380–1; Arnold, *Caliphate* 112–4; Melvin-Koushki, Empire 361; Fleischer, Learning 159; Binbaş, *Networks* 260–1, 268, 270–1, 274; Markiewicz, *Crisis* 256–7.

675   Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 107–8.

676   Hunwick, Askia 85; Hunwick, Piety 300–2; Sartain, Relations 196.

677   Auer, *Symbols* 13, 53, 120, 191–21. See also Becker, Studien 376; Arnold, *Caliphate* 116–7.

Answer: I said: "This contradicts the doctrine of the *mutakallimūn*, because they hold that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, did not bequeath the caliphate to anyone among the Companions. Rather, after him the command passed on by means of the pledge of allegiance (*bi-l-mubāyaʿa*) and the Companions swore allegiance to Abū Bakr—may God be pleased with him—then [Abū Bakr] bequeathed it to ʿUmar.

ʿUmar made the affair of the caliphate an issue of consultation (*shūrā*) between Ṭalḥa [b. ʿUbaydallāh], Zubayr [b. al-ʿAwwām], ʿUthmān [b. ʿAffān], ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭālib], ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. ʿAwf], and Saʿd [b. Abī Waqqāṣ] and said: 'If these six agree on someone, then he is caliph. If four agree on someone, then make him [caliph]. If three agree on someone and three agree on someone [else], then make the [caliph] the one with whom Ibn ʿAwf sides.' Three of them including Ibn ʿAwf agreed on ʿUthmān and they made him caliph.

Then after ʿUthmān, the post of the caliphate remained vacant and the Muslims elected ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."

Rectification (*taḥqīq*): "You know that Muʿāwiya did not receive the robe of the caliphate from the ʿAbbasids, nor [did] Yazīd, and it was the same with Marwān and Walīd, despite the fact that Ibn ʿAbbās was alive during their time. Know that the only one who appointed the ʿAbbasid caliphs was Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī."[678]

In this passage, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan and an unnamed person sought to defend the legitimacy of the ʿAbbasids of Cairo with two arguments, quoted in a rather short and condensed form, while much more room is given to the refutations of the first-person narrator. These structural characteristics most probably reflect al-Sharīf's priorities as the author of the text. Moreover, both here and in other sections, the account of the debate features clearly judgmental terms, such as *jadal* and *taḥqīq*; thereby the account is unambiguous about whose point of view should be considered correct.

Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's first argument followed the time-honored strategy of quoting alleged prophetic traditions foretelling the reign of the ʿAbbasids.[679] The particular tradition cited does not appear in the six standard Sunni *ḥadīth* collections and al-Sharīf discarded it as inauthentic. However, his criticism did not focus on the *isnād* of the tradition, but was directed against its *matn*, as was typical for engagement with prophetic traditions in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[680]

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678   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 222–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 103–4.
679   For such traditions, see al-Suyūṭī in Arazi and Elʿad, al-Ināfa 254–61.
680   Cf. section 4.2.6 above.

Al-Sharīf rejected the *ḥadīth* on three grounds: First, the fact that Abū Bakr and not al-ʿAbbās became caliph after the Prophet's death spoke against the designation of al-ʿAbbās. Second, if the caliphate were inherited from father to son as the pro-ʿAbbasid party implicitly suggested, Abū Bakr's son should have succeeded his father, but this did not happen. Finally, even though Sunnis and Shiʿis had their differences about the rightful leader of the Muslim community after Muḥammad's demise, none of them backed al-ʿAbbās.

Then, an unnamed person tried to counter al-Sharīf's point by arguing that the first four caliphs were exceptional cases because the Prophet had appointed them in his last will. In rebutting this claim, the first-person narrator somewhat ironically used arguments from mainstream Sunni thought to refute ʿAbbasid claims to the caliphate. He first stated that the Prophet did not appoint anyone as caliph before his death; in this, the narrator referred to sections on the imamate in Sunni *kalām* works that were meant to refute the Shiʿi view that the Prophet had designated a successor.[681] Al-Sharīf then gave a condensed account of the first four caliphs' appointments, according to the standard Sunni vision of history. Thereafter, he made the point that the Umayyad dynasty also held the caliphate without any ʿAbbasid involvement, demonstrating that the period in which the ʿAbbasids did not hold the caliphate exceeded the reigns of the first four caliphs. Finally, al-Sharīf stated that the ʿAbbasids had attained the caliphate solely through the support of Abū Muslim (d. 137/754), the leader of the movement commonly referred to as the ʿAbbasid "revolution." Al-Sharīf thus employed notions widely shared among the Sunnis of his time to prove that the ʿAbbasid family was not especially entitled to the caliphate.

At this point, al-Ghawrī intervened in the debate:

> **Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "What do you want to attain from this discussion (*baḥth*)?"
>
> **Answer:** I said: "I do not want to be counted among the bastards, because the sultans of our lands do not wear robe[s] of the caliph at all."
>
> **Question:** Our lord the sultan said: "You have attended the *majālis* of the sultans of the non-Arabs and you have seen our *majālis*."
>
> **Answer:** I said: "Before long, they made me complain because they spent all their days with wine and amusements. But nevertheless, no one raised [any] doubt that their appointment was correct. Then how can it be possible that someone raises doubts regarding the sultan of the

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681   On these sections, see, e.g., al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 109–10, 169; Bauer, *Kultur* 317, 320–1; Eichner, Handbooks 512.

noble sanctuaries and the overlord of Egypt and says that his appointment without the caliph's permission is not correct?"

Fourth question: Our lord the sultan said: "How many *takbīr*s are there in the prayer of the feast (*ṣalāt al-ʿīd*)?"

Answer: I said [not answering the question]: "My body trembles and I cannot speak."

Our lord the sultan said: "Are you afraid?"

I said: "How [could I] not?"[682]

Thereafter, the first-person narrator discussed in detail the number of *takbīr*s according to the different schools of law.[683] The other *majlis* participants, however, evidently did not consider the matter of the caliphate settled:

> **Wrangling (*mujādala*):** Kamāl al-Dīn al-Barqūqī said: "You are possessed (*majnūn*)!"
>
> **Answer:** I said: "You are the only one who is possessed here!"
>
> Our lord the sultan said: "Do not talk to al-Sharīf with [such] a temper (*khulq*)!"[684]
>
> **Quarrel (*jadal*):** Khawāṣṣ al-Muʾadhdhin said: "Our lord the sultan, people born in lands whose sultans do not wear robe[s] of the caliph do not befit this *majlis*."
>
> Answer: I said: "Shut up!"
>
> Our lord the sultan said: "You are saved [from these accusations] if you bring a *fatwā* [supporting your position] from the four [*madhhab*] heads."
>
> I said: "If I do not bring [a *fatwā*], the Noble Station [that is, the sultan] shall behead me."
>
> **What is fitting (*munāsib*) for this *majlis*:** The sultan of the prophets, upon whom be the best of blessings and peace, said: "After me the caliphate lasts thirty years, and thereafter there will be *mulk* and *imāra*."
>
> **Closing word (*khātima*):** ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—may God be pleased with him—said: "The most just of the people deserves to rule over them."[685]

This passage marked the climax of the debate. The sultan, after inquiring with the first-person narrator why he took such an active interest in the question

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682   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 223–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 104–6.
683   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224; (ed. ʿAzzām) 106.
684   The manuscript clearly has *khulq* and not *khurq* as in ʿAzzām's edition.
685   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 224–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 106–7.

of the caliphate, sought to change the topic by asking al-Sharīf first about his experience in the *majālis* of other rulers, and then about a completely unrelated nicety of Islamic law. However, al-Sharīf was not willing to let the matter go and noted in his reply to al-Ghawrī's first query that although the rulers of his home region engaged in sinful behavior, no one questioned their rightful appointment. Moreover, he queried how one could opine that the rule of the Egyptian sultan was only legitimate and lawful thanks to caliphal consent. The issue was nothing less than the basis of al-Ghawrī's claim to legitimate rule: Did he govern in his own right, or only as the caliph's deputy? For the time being, however, al-Ghawrī decided not to approach this issue and instead tried to calm the situation. His attempt failed when two other *majlis* participants again attacked al-Sharīf personally and challenged his right to attend the sultan's *majlis*, given his alleged status as an illegitimate child. Consequently, the sultan suggested that al-Sharīf obtain a *fatwā* from leading jurisconsults to resolve all doubts about his birth status.

Al-Sharīf's apparent isolation in the *majlis* might be explained by his position as a foreigner. It is also possible that al-Sharīf highlighted the other participants' resentments against him in his work as a narrative strategy to demonstrate the favor he enjoyed with the sultan, who supported him, at least to a degree. Moreover, the author might have emphasized the opposition against him as a way to render his triumph over his adversaries, narrated in a later section of the work, even more glorious.

The two final parts of the passage just quoted definitely reflect al-Sharīf's intention to present himself and his arguments in a positive light. He first added, as a kind of afterthought to another argument, his view as to why the 'Abbasids did not enjoy a special status—he did this by quoting a prophetic tradition already discussed, according to which the caliphate would only exist for thirty years after the Prophet's death. Second, he argued that justice, and not noble lineage, qualified a person to rule, thus rejecting the idea that certain kinship groups were more entitled to political leadership than others.

According to al-Sharīf, the next *majlis* that took place a few days later featured a large-scale review of *mamlūk* recruits. There was thus no time left to continue the discussion about the caliphate.[686] Nevertheless, the author used the account of this *majlis* to insert his explanation, analyzed above, that al-Ghawrī fulfilled the qualifications for a supreme ruler—according to both the ancient Persian tradition and Islamic law.

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686   Al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (ᴍꜱ) 224–5; (ed. 'Azzām) 107.

On Saturday, the 1 Rajab 911/28 November 1505, the *majālis* participants resumed their debate about the caliphate:[687]

> His Excellency, our lord the sultan asked for the reply to the question about the caliphate. I stood up, kissed the ground, sat down in the middle of the *majlis* and brought out the *fatwā*s. It was written therein: "What do the authorities of the *ʿulamāʾ*—may the favor of God Most High be upon them—say about a man who says that the marriage contracts of the Muslims and the authority of His Excellency, the sultan of Egypt—may God Most High let him rest firmly on the fundaments of his dominion—are not valid without the appointment of the Commander of the Believers Yaʿqūb al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh, the ʿAbbasid caliph of Egypt, and persists in this doctrine without recourse to a *fatwā* from the four [*madhhab*] heads. Does the one in authority have the right to castigate him or not?"
>
> **Answer:** *Shaykh* Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf wrote in reply: "Praise be to God who guides to what is right! The situation is not like what the one who says this maintains. Whoever persists in this and stubbornly continues to persist in it may be castigated, and God knows best. It was written by Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Shāfiʿī."
>
> **Answer:** *Shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭawīl declared [this legal opinion] authoritative.
>
> **Answer:** The judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, the Ḥanafī chief judge, declared it authoritative. *Shaykh* Burhān al-Dīn al-Damīrī, the Mālikī chief judge, declared it authoritative. The Ḥanbalī chief judge declared it authoritative. *Shaykh* Badr al-Dīn [al-]Dīrī[688] declared it authoritative, too.[689]

When asking for the *fatwā* demanded by the sultan, al-Sharīf did not solicit a legal opinion on the status of children born in the lands of rulers lacking caliphal appointment, as one might expect given the course of the earlier debate. Rather, he posed a question that touched directly upon al-Ghawrī's status as ruler and his relationship with the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Mustamsik. Moreover, it also affected the chief judges' status, as they had received their appointments from al-Ghawrī and were dependent on the sultan's patronage.

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687 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 228–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 109.
688 On him, see appendix 2.
689 Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 229–30; (ed. ʿAzzām) 109–10.

Al-Sharīf received a legal reply from Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf, who, as noted, was a high-ranking and respected Shāfiʿī jurist who enjoyed the sultan's favor but nevertheless later opposed the ruler to defend what he considered the right interpretation of the law in the affair of the adulterous deputy judge.[690] However, in the case at hand, Ibn Abī Sharīf's legal opinion did not alienate his patron: He ruled that a person who persistently claimed that the sultan's authority was void without caliphal appointment had erred and could be disciplined.

Remarkably, Ibn Abī Sharīf's *fatwā* as reported by al-Sharīf lacked any legal justification and did not include a statement about the proper relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate. Ibn Abī Sharīf surely knew about the sensitive nature of the issue. Moreover, he must have been aware that it would be difficult to produce a detailed legal ruling based on the Shāfiʿī legal discourse on the imamate[691] that Sultan al-Ghawrī would approve of, while also paying proper respect to the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Mustamsik. Hence, it is understandable that Ibn Abī Sharīf limited his *fatwā* to the shortest form possible.[692]

This summary form of the *fatwā* probably also made it easier for the four chief judges and a further Ḥanafī scholar to consent to Ibn Abī Sharīf's opinion. Thus, al-Sharīf succeeded in securing a legal statement backed by all four schools of law that supported his arguments, as he had promised the sultan. Nevertheless, at least one of his adversaries continued to oppose him:

> **Senseless jabber (*hadhayān*):** Then, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan said: "The honor [that elevates] the sultan of Egypt over the [other] sultans of the world is that he is the caliph's deputy."
>
> I said: "You have left one thing out, namely, that the sultan of Yemen is independent (*mustaqill*) in his sultanate and is no one's deputy. Then how can it be that the sultan of Egypt and the noble sanctuaries is [only] a deputy? No one is proud of a deputyship that is not legally stipulated."

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690   Cf. section 4.1.2.2 above.

691   The prominence of Shāfiʿī legal discourse on the caliphate in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* is noteworthy, given that the sultan and several of his most prominent intimates were Ḥanafīs. In addition to the fact that the majority of the Egyptian population were Shāfiʿīs, the greater level of attention that Shāfiʿī authors had accorded to the sultanate compared to Ḥanafī political literature (cf. Tezcan, Hanafism; Winter, Competition; Hassan, *Longing* 121–3; Veinstein, Origines 28) might explain this situation.

692   It seems improbable that al-Sharīf only quoted a shortened form of the *fatwā*, given that it supported his point of view.

Question: His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "What do you say regarding al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars? He put on the caliphal robe."

Answer: I said: "[He did this] to console [the ʿAbbasids coming to Cairo], because they were the offspring of the ʿAbbasid caliphs and were devastated. Hence, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir sought to enhance their greatness and put on a robe from them. The caliph was then proud that the sultan of Egypt had put on his robe, but the sultan of Egypt was not proud of the robe."

Senseless jabber: Umm Abū l-Ḥasan said: "If al-Sharīf had said this in Sultan Qāytbāy's time, he would have beheaded him."

Then His Excellency our lord the sultan became angry and said: "Have you come to behead people?! We do not need you to behead our associates! May God curse you [that is, al-Sharīf] if you do not behead him [that is, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan] tomorrow according to the law!"

Pearl (*durra*): [The sultan continued:] "The quintessence of what you say is that Qāytbāy was tyrannical like this. When did you meet Sultan Qāytbāy and when did you attend his *majlis*? Do you think I do not know you?"

Pearl: [The sultan continued:] "For what reason do you sit in the middle of [my] *majlis* and talk so much? Get up!"

Pearl: Then His Excellency the sultan turned to the right and to the left and said: "Are you not witnesses that this hapless fellow has said: 'The Muslims' marriage contracts are not valid in countries whose sultan does not wear a caliphal robe, the [people born there] are all bastards, and the appointment of their sultan is also not valid'? Go tomorrow with al-Sharīf and bear witness in front of the four chief judges and do with him whatever the law entails for him."

Senseless jabber: [Umm Abū l-Ḥasan] said: "I said that the Muslims' marriage contracts are only valid in Egypt thanks to the caliph's appointment."

Then, our lord the sultan became angry at him again and said: "Do the lands of Egypt not belong to the lands of the Muslims or is its sultan the most insignificant of the sultans of the world?!"

Those present in the *majlis* said [to Umm Abū l-Ḥasan]: "Stand up [and leave] this confrontation with the sultan!" He then started [to look] like a dead man.

Jewel (*jawhara*): His Excellency, our lord the sultan said: "[Al-]Sharīf, go together with all the people born in Anatolia, the Maghrib, [the lands] of the non-Arabs, and Yemen with [Umm Abū l-Ḥasan] to the judges and castigate him."

> **Cancellation (ʿajz):** When the *majlis* ended, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan came
> and kissed the foot of the *imām* Muḥibb al-Dīn.[693] Then they interceded
> for him. His Excellency, our lord the sultan summoned me and said:
> "Reconcile with each other and do not mention [again] what has been
> said."[694]

According to this passage, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was unimpressed with the *fatwā*
that al-Sharīf had obtained and instead of admitting defeat launched an attack
on both al-Sharīf's position and al-Ghawrī's status as an independent ruler by
arguing that the only thing that set al-Ghawrī apart from other Muslim lead-
ers was his close relationship with the caliph of Cairo—a notion encountered
above in our review of the earlier Mamluk discourse on the caliphate.[695] There-
by Umm Abū l-Ḥasan again reduced al-Ghawrī's status to that of a caliphal
deputy, but this time not only from a legal perspective, but also vis-á-vis his
Muslim political rivals, against whom al-Ghawrī was defending the traditional
status of the Mamluk Sultanate as the supreme polity. Hence, Umm Abū l-Ḥa-
san's statement assailed both al-Ghawrī's attempts to legitimate himself as a
ruler in his own right and his efforts to ensure Mamluk transregional suprem-
acy.

The first-person narrator illustrated these problematic implications of Umm
Abū l-Ḥasan's argumentation through the case of the Tahirid sultans of Yemen
who ruled in their own right, although their realm was considered inferior to
that of the Mamluks and they could not rival the latter's position in trans-
regional politics as overlords of the Hijaz. Here al-Sharīf repeated that the
traditional understanding of the Mamluk sultans as caliphal deputies was no
longer adequate in the larger transregional political context, given that few
other Muslim rulers were concerned about the ʿAbbasids of Cairo.

Yet, al-Sharīf's argument had a weak point, as the sultan pointed out: How
could one explain that Baybars had established the ʿAbbasids in Cairo and
accepted a robe of investiture from them? In his reply, al-Sharīf brought his
argument that the Mamluk sultans were ruling in their own right to its logical
conclusion by stating that Baybars accepted his caliphal investiture only out of
pity for the ʿAbbasids. Here, al-Sharīf projected his understanding of the Mam-
luk sultans as independent rulers back to the founding days of the sultanate
and argued that the ʿAbbasids of Cairo derived their legitimacy from the Mam-
luk sultans, rather than the reverse.[696]

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693   On him, see appendix 2.
694   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 110–3.
695   For details, see also Hassan, *Longing* 133–5.
696   See also Heidemann, *Kalifat* 199.

For Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, al-Sharīf's view was an insult to the ʿAbbasid dynasty, and he noted that al-Ghawrī's former master Qāytbāy, who was known for his piety, would have executed al-Sharīf for such an affront. This last comment led to al-Ghawrī's angry outburst. According to the following tirade as recounted by al-Sharīf, al-Ghawrī took issue with Umm Abū l-Ḥasan on three grounds: (1) The jester had arrogated to himself the prerogative to pronounce verdicts on the sultan's intimates. (2) He suggested that Qāytbāy had been a tyrannical ruler who executed his subjects without due cause. (3) By maintaining his position that caliphal investiture was necessary to contract marriages and legally wield political power, Umm Abū l-Ḥasan had acted contrary to the chief judges's *fatwā* that al-Sharīf had obtained and was henceforth liable to punishment. When Umm Abū l-Ḥasan tried to defend himself against this last accusation by pointing out that his argument had only addressed the specific situation in Egypt, the situation escalated even further, since the sultan understood this objection as belittling his own status as a ruler and that of his realm as a central part of the Islamicate world.

At this point, other members of the *majlis* intervened and recommended that Umm Abū l-Ḥasan leave the sultan's presence to avoid further tensions. Thereupon, the sultan renewed his order to have Umm Abū l-Ḥasan castigated and told al-Sharīf that he and all other foreigners accused by the jester as being illegitimate should join in his punishment. It was only after the end of the *majlis*, that members of al-Ghawrī's court society were able to intercede for Umm Abū l-Ḥasan and persuade the ruler to revoke his order.

The debate just analyzed is of outstanding importance for our understanding of the political culture of the late Mamluk court in general and the conceptualization of the caliphate in this communicative context in particular, although we cannot be certain that it took place precisely as al-Sharīf narrated it. Its inclusion in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* nevertheless demonstrates that members of al-Ghawrī's court propagated a variety of visions of the proper relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate. The text placed al-Sharīf on one end of the spectrum of opinions since he considered the ʿAbbasid caliphate as legally unnecessary, as at odds with the political needs of the time, and as deriving its legitimacy from the Mamluk sultanate in the first place. Consequently, the ʿAbbasid caliphate of Cairo was dispensable. Rather than maintaining this obsolete institution, al-Ghawrī should be recognized as an independent ruler in his own right, given that, as al-Sharīf explained elsewhere, he fulfilled the necessary qualifications for supreme and sovereign rule according to both the pre-Islamic Persian theory of kingship and Islamic law.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* presented Umm Abū l-Ḥasan as an advocate of the customary model of Mamluk sultanic-

caliphal relations. According to Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, the special status of the Mamluk rulers was based on their close and direct contacts with the ʿAbbasid caliphs, to whom all regional Muslim rulers had to apply for proper investiture to ensure their rightful rule and the continued validity of legal transactions in their realms. In this model, Mamluks rulers were merely caliphal deputies.

According to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, al-Ghawrī first tried to remain aloof from this debate. After posing the question that first started the discussion, he remained silent for an atypically long period and then attempted to change the topic of conversation—an observation that raises the question whether the sultan felt uncomfortable with the situation. The sultan only became fully involved in the discussion when Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's statements threatened his status as an independent ruler and at the same time infringed on the memory of his revered predecessor Qāytbāy. Although al-Ghawrī then clearly sided with al-Sharīf, he did not go so far as to punish Umm Abū l-Ḥasan for his statements.

Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's special status as a jester figure in the *mukhannathūn* tradition probably protected him to a certain degree from the sultan's anger and allowed him to make statements that would not have been tolerated for other *majālis* members.[697] In this capacity, he fulfilled an important function in the sultan's court society, for he alone could voice the view that, to at least some of his subjects, the sultan's rule was not independent, but derived its legitimacy from the continued existence of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in Cairo. It is impossible to assess how widespread this understanding might have been among the population at the time, but historiographical and legal texts from the late Mamluk period suggest that large segments of al-Ghawrī's subjects viewed the ʿAbbasid caliphs with utmost reverence and at the least, upheld their nominal status as the Prophet Muḥammad's successors. Thus, in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* Umm Abū l-Ḥasan represented a vox populi that could speak truth to power in a situation of heated transregional rivalry in which al-Ghawrī could not afford to permit any other form of open political opposition in his court.

Moreover, the figure of Umm Abū l-Ḥasan was also important at the level of textual composition, as he provided al-Sharīf with the adversary he needed to spell out his arguments, demonstrate his acumen, and ultimately, win the argument, at least in his own view. Although this adversary voiced views that were very similar to those held by leading intellectual figures such as al-Suyūṭī, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* does not depict Umm Abū l-Ḥasan as an accomplished scholar, but as a jester in the tradition of the *mukhannathūn*. Thereby,

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697   Cf. section 4.1.2.4 above.

the text lends further cogency to al-Sharīf's arguments, whose adversary in debate appears as a mere laughingstock.

The picture of al-Sharīf that emerges from the text is that of an ambitious client advocating a novel system of Mamluk politics that would allow al-Ghawrī to meet his political rivals on equal footing as an independent ruler. Operating within a patronage framework, al-Sharīf could expect a reward for coming up with what he apparently considered an important strategy to overcome the crisis of legitimacy of al-Ghawrī's rule vis-à-vis transregional rivals. The significance that al-Sharīf accorded to his reconceptualization of al-Ghawrī's status as the actual caliph of the time becomes apparent from the fact that the discussion about the caliphate extends across two separate *majālis*—a feature that is highly uncommon in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. The patronage context of the debate also raises questions regarding al-Sharīf's stake in it. Did he really want to rid himself of the stigma of illegitimate birth? Was he primarily seeking to demonstrate his worth as a resourceful client who could render valuable services by legitimating the sultan's rule? Or was his chief goal to disgrace his rival Umm Abū l-Ḥasan? While the textual logic and background of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* clearly support the second alternative, the only thing we can say with certainty is that according to his text, al-Sharīf managed to achieve all three goals.

Al-Sharīf's new conceptualization of al-Ghawrī as the actual caliph brought with it the question of the fate of the ʿAbbasid caliphate of Cairo. Should the office continue to exist, and if so, what was its relation to the Mamluk sultanate? After all, our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* indicate that in accordance with earlier theories, it was assumed that there could be only one caliph at a time. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* does not include a discussion of the question of the ʿAbbasid caliphate and it is unclear whether the members of al-Ghawrī's court ever analyzed this issue in detail. However, a theoretical debate about the caliph's status might in any case have been a difficult way to approach this subject, given its sensitive character and the implications it had for the political, religious, and ceremonial life of the Mamluk court and the sultanate at large. Rather, the members of the court relied on the inherently polyvalent nature of symbolic communication to address this issue in the course of the celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet of the year 911/1505–6. As discussed above, the account of this event in al-Sharīf's work describes how the leading figures of the realm, including the ʿAbbasid caliph, paid their homage to al-Ghawrī.[698] Here, we quote again the pertinent passage:

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698   Cf. section 5.1.1.2 above.

Then, the commanders of 1,000 [soldiers] stood up and came forth like angels in rows in length and width. All of them kissed the ground. Then, the oldest of the children of Quraysh, the heir of the dominion and the army, the son of the uncle of the Arabian Prophet, the Hashimite, the Muṭṭalibite, the Commander of the Believers, Yaʿqūb al-Mustamsik bi-Llāh, the caliph of Egypt, stepped in front of them and kissed the ground as an individual duty (*farḍ al-ʿayn*) and as the choicest of duties. Then, the caliph said:

> "The caliphate is a garment that has been destined for you.
>> If you wear it, then nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.
> God gave our pupils the power to see,
>> Only in order to differentiate between pearls and beads."

Then, our lord the sultan treated him kindly and raised him above all exalted great men.[699]

Three aspects of this passage deserve special attention: the caliph's symbolic actions and his behavior toward the sultan, his introduction by al-Sharīf, and the verses attributed to him.

The caliph entered the stage only after the highest-ranking *amīr*s had already paid homage to the sultan. This order of appearance translated political realities into a chronological sequence and highlighted that the Mamluk commanders—and the military might they represented—were the most important basis of al-Ghawrī's rule, with the caliph coming only in the second position.

Moreover, the caliph not only stepped in front of the sultan, but rather performed the ultimate symbolic gesture of submission known in Mamluk political communication—he obediently kissed the ground in front of al-Ghawrī in the presence of high-ranking members of the court, who together with the sultan apparently constituted the intended audience for this act. According to al-Sharīf, al-Mustamsik did not kiss the ground voluntarily, rather he fulfilled an "individual duty"—a term with strong legal connotations, which, if taken literally indicated that the caliph would be committing a sin or an offense if he did not kiss the ground in front of al-Ghawrī. The caliph's appearance ended after the sultan treated him kindly and honored him, thus again clearly indicating the difference in status between the two men, with the caliph figuring as one out of many subordinates of the sultan.

Nevertheless, the caliph's traditional status had not, apparently, fallen into complete oblivion, given that his appearance preceded that of all other civilian

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699   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 123; (ed. ʿAzzām) 42.

and military officials. Moreover, through his choice of titulature, even al-Sharīf accorded a special rank to al-Mustamsik. He not only identified the latter in a fourfold way, as the Prophet's relative by calling him "oldest of the children of Quraysh," "son of the uncle of the Arabian Prophet," "the Hashimite," and the "Muṭṭalibite," but also referred to him with the traditional title of "Commander of the Believers" and the less common "caliph of Egypt," which suggested a more regionally confined sphere of influence. Moreover, the honorific "heir of the dominion (*mamlaka*) and the army" highlighted the caliph's role as a link in the chain of inherited political and military authority and drew attention to al-Mustamsik's role as a living connection between the late Mamluk period and the early Islamic tradition of rulership.

These titles could be taken to mean that the caliph was not only a speaking and breathing symbol of the continued unity of the Muslim *umma* across time and space, but also that he had an inherited right to political authority. However, we must also take into account the poem that al-Sharīf ascribed to the caliph. The first pair of verses straightforwardly likens the caliphate to a piece of clothing destined for al-Ghawrī that would fit him if he put it on. The second pair of verses are slightly more ambiguous, as they assert that God gave human beings the power to see so that they can distinguish between the good and the bad, the valuable and the worthless. One possible interpretation, ironic and unfavorable to al-Ghawrī, would suggest that everyone could decide for themselves who merited the caliphate when they looked at al-Ghawrī in his new metaphorical caliphal garb. Alternatively, the verses could be interpreted to mean that al-Ghawrī was offered the caliphate because his qualities were obvious to everyone possessing sight.

Even if the first reading of the second pairs of verses was intended by their author, the poem as a whole essentially amounts to nothing short of a mandate for al-Ghawrī to take over the caliphate. Given the importance accorded by earlier works of political and legal thought to designation as a legitimate way of regulating caliphal succession, the significance of such a step can hardly be overestimated. While we cannot be sure that al-Mustamsik uttered these verses, they do offer insights into how al-Sharīf, as a member of al-Ghawrī's court, envisioned the relationship of the caliphate and the sultanate and they indicate that a formal sultanic takeover of the caliphate was at least a topic of consideration, if indeed it had not already been effected. Moreover, the poem also added a new layer of meaning to the epithets that al-Sharīf used to highlight al-Mustamsik's kinship ties with the Prophet and his role as heir of the ʿAbbasid political tradition. Rather than exercising his inherited right to political authority himself, al-Sharīf depicted the caliph as transferring it, with his poem, to al-Ghawrī. According to al-Sharīf, al-Mustamsik's role in al-

Ghawrī's court was not that of a claimant for legitimate dynastic rule, but rather that of a transmitter of this claim to al-Ghawrī. Consequently, members of the court, who, according to al-Sharīf's account, were present when the poem was uttered, could see the sultan as the rightfully designated and appointed holder of the caliphate. In their view, the ʿAbbasid caliph was a distinguished member of the religio-civilian establishment, who, however, had consigned all of his political prerogatives and his office to the sultan and had to submit to the latter's will like all other subjects. Though al-Sharīf did not directly state it, this understanding of al-Ghawrī's status vis-à-vis al-Mustamsik also justified the application of titles such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn* to the sultan. Through al-Mustamsik's designation, al-Ghawrī not only bore these caliphal titles, but could also lay claim to the office to which they belonged.

Taken together, our sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* demonstrate that the issue of the relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate was intensively debated among the members of al-Ghawrī's court.[700] In their discussions, what had long been regarded as the established late Mamluk model of caliphal-sultanic relations was by no means privileged or even predominant. It seems possible that the secluded character of the *majālis* played a decisive role here, as it gave participants the opportunity to freely develop their thoughts on alternative understandings of the status of the caliphate vis-à-vis the sultanate.[701] At the same time, these events allowed them to spread their views among members of the courtly elite who, as we saw above, constituted a key audience for activities intended to legitimate al-Ghawrī's rule.

According to *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, members of al-Ghawrī's court held the view that the caliphate had ceased to function as a political institution well before their time, either with the Mongol conquest of Baghdad or even just thirty years after the Prophet Muḥammad's death. Hence, in a Mamluk context, the novel application of caliphal titles to al-Ghawrī and other regional rulers did not call for a detailed explanation, since the office to which they traditionally belonged no longer existed.

The picture that emerges from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* is far more complex. According to it, some members of the sultan's inner circle, such as the jester Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, upheld the customary view known, inter alia, from al-Suyūṭī, that the sultan's authority derived its legitimacy from his status as caliphal deputy, while others including al-Sharīf opined that al-Ghawrī was a

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700   For a similar observation for the Mamluk period more broadly, see van Steenbergen, *Caliphate* 101.

701   See Marsham, Caliph 10, 13, 24, for the observation that court contexts could offer favorable conditions for experiments with novel political models and titles.

fully independent ruler in his own right. Moreover, al-Sharīf made the unprecedented argument that al-Ghawrī could rightfully claim caliphal status because he not only fulfilled all the legal requirements for the imamate, but had also been officially offered the caliphate by the ʿAbbasid al-Mustamsik.

How can we explain this development, which appears to be unique in the context of Mamluk political and legal thought? Although an explanation that identifies traits in the sultan's character, such as his alleged vanity or desire for power as the primary driving force prima facie might appear plausible, there is strong evidence against this assumption. First, in his work al-Sharīf portrayed al-Ghawrī as first trying to evade discussions about his relation with the ʿAbbasids and as taking a more defensive stance on this question than the author. Indeed this might indicate that al-Ghawrī was more reluctant to embrace al-Sharīf's point of view than the author had hoped. Second, there is no proof that the sultan ever personally or actively laid claim to caliphal titles such as *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat al-muslimīn*; for example, by using these titles in building inscriptions. We only have sources by other authors who attributed these titles to the sultan and we cannot know whether the titles were used with the sultan's consent or encouragement. Consequently, it is impossible to determine how prominent the issue of the caliphate figured in al-Ghawrī's strategies of self-legitimation.

Rather than trying to explain this novel feature of Mamluk political theory in relation to the sultan's personality, it is more convincing to link it to broader structural developments in the political world of the late Mamluk period in general and to the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy discussed above in particular.[702] This crisis was, to a considerable degree, the result of the fact that Mamluk dynastic rivals such as the Ottomans and the Safawids spread claims about their superior legitimacy to rule. Among other assertions, the Ottomans claimed to be rightful caliphs in their own right, as, according to *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, members of the Mamluk court knew very well. While other regional rulers made the same assertions, the Safawid Shāh Ismāʿīl went significantly further in his assertions by arrogating to himself divine status.[703]

Under such new circumstances, the traditional Mamluk strategy to derive legitimacy from the presence of an ʿAbbasid caliph in Cairo, one whom transregional rivals often no longer recognized, was no longer sufficient. In a rapidly changing political arena where an increasing number of rulers claimed caliphal status, and indeed even sought higher levels of religious and political

702   Cf. section 2.1 above.
703   Cf. section 2.1 above.

authority, it was no longer viable for the Mamluk sultans to present them-
selves as merely deputies of the members of a dynasty whose forefathers had
been influential several hundred years ago. In a world of self-declared caliphs,
the presence of the ʿAbbasids in Cairo, which was initially an advantage in
the game for transregional legitimacy, had become a liability that prevented
the Mamluks from overtaking their rivals. The accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*
affirm that at least some members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the Per-
sianate immigrant al-Sharīf, recognized this problem and sought to resolve it
through novel and innovative conceptualizations of how sultanic and caliphal
authority related to each other. Thereby, they built on and reinterpreted the
heritage of centuries of Islamicate political and legal thought and presented
their conclusions in texts beyond the usual genres of political writing such as
mirrors-for-princes, legal treatises, and chancery manuals. The new circum-
stances in which they lived apparently forced them to abandon the model of
caliphal-sultanic coexistence that had served Mamluk interests for centuries
and instead devise a novel vision of Islamic rule that they expressed in forms
unknown from earlier periods of Mamluk history. They did this, first and fore-
most, among fellow members of al-Ghawrī's court, who necessarily constituted
one of the most important target audiences for all efforts to legitimate late
Mamluk rule.

Although the title of a recent study on the ʿAbbasid caliphate in Cairo asserts
that in the Mamluk context "Naught Remains to the Caliph but His Title,"[704]
the creative reinterpretations of Islamicate political and legal thought at al-
Ghawrī's court did not even leave the ʿAbbasids exclusive prerogatives to their
traditional titles. Moreover, our results call for a revision of other statements
found in current scholarship, for example, that the conditions of Qurashī and
ʿAbbasid descent were "non-negotiable criteria for the caliphate"[705] in Mamluk
times, that "none of [the Mamluk rulers] ever dared abolish the caliphate itself
and rule solely by their own virtue,"[706] and that "no Mamluk sultan could even
contemplate a policy of completely dispensing with the caliph."[707] Our sources
show that in the early tenth/sixteenth century, the Mamluk courtly elite took
steps to either establish al-Ghawrī as a non-Qurashī caliph or—although this
option seems to have been considered a less attractive option—declare the
caliphate obsolete altogether. These two approaches were nothing short of a
fundamental transformation of the political status quo in the Mamluk Sul-

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704   Banister, Revisiting 219.
705   Banister, Sword 10.
706   Banister, Revisiting 243–4.
707   Berkey, Policy 12.

tanate and beyond—a finding that casts doubt on recent characterizations of Sunni political thought during the late middle period as relatively static, uncreative, and "deadlock[ed]."[708]

Of course we must acknowledge the theoretical possibility that the new vision of the proper relationship between the caliphate and sultanate, as voiced in our sources, had precursors in Mamluk political and legal thought, precursors outside al-Ghawrī's court that are unknown to us. However, if such antecedents indeed existed, they left no known traces in available written sources and are, therefore, currently inaccessible to historical research. Here as elsewhere, it is particularly unfortunate that we do not know of other accounts of earlier courtly Mamluk *majālis* comparable to those from al-Ghawrī's reign, as such sources might provide us with information about how the Mamluk ruling elite envisioned, debated, and reimagined the political structure of the sultanate in the secluded social venue offered by such salons. In the absence of such texts, however, only the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* offer us deep insights into the innovative ways in which the members of the late Mamluk court reinterpreted the concept of the caliphate in their attempts to deal with the radical political transformations in the Islamicate world of the ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries. If we agree with Hakan Karateke's description of the caliphate as the institution that had "the most powerful and effective claim to normative legitimacy in the Islamic political discourse"[709] and note that in most premodern Islamicate societies, the caliphate represented, strictly speaking, the only form of legal authority in a Weberian sense,[710] we can conclude that members of al-Ghawrī's court sought and managed to find unprecedented ways to integrate this form of supreme normative legitimacy and legal authority into the Mamluk sultan's traditional claim for obedience and thereby betrayed their keen awareness of the broader Islamicate political landscape of their time.

6.2.3.5   Long-Term Ramifications

Did the novel and innovative conceptualization of caliphal-sultanic relations that was developed at al-Ghawrī's court have any impact on later Islamicate political thought and practice? Or did it end with al-Ghawrī's death and the downfall of the Mamluk Sultanate? Although we do not know of later texts referring to the pertinent passages in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, it is clear that after the conquest of the Mamluk realm, the Ottomans faced the same problem that members of al-Ghawrī's court society had tried to resolve:

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708   Binbaş, *Networks* 283.

709   Karateke, Legitimizing 21.

710   For a similar evaluation without reference to Weber, see Paul, *Herrschaft* 15.

How should one deal with a scion of the ʿAbbasid dynasty who had been leg-
ally invested with the caliphate without reducing the sultan—in this case the
Ottoman Selīm—to the status of a mere deputy?

The Ottoman course of action closely paralleled the one members of al-
Ghawrī's court had advocated: First, the Ottomans made sure that the caliph al-
Mutawakkil III could not function as a figurehead of an independent political
authority; they did this by keeping him under house arrest and later bringing
him to Istanbul, as discussed above. Second, although they treated the caliph
with outward reverence, there is no evidence that the Ottomans ever form-
ally recognized his supreme authority before, with al-Mutawakkil's demise, the
ʿAbbasid caliphate became extinct.[711] Rather, Selīm continued to be referred
to by caliphal titles, as had been the case before the Ottoman invasion of the
Mamluk realm.[712] Third, in the years after the conquest of Cairo, Ottoman legal
scholars began to devise sophisticated theories to justify their rulers' caliphal
status. They either followed earlier traditions of legal reasoning, according to
which Qurashī descent was not indispensable for the caliphate, as al-Sharīf
had done in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*; or they simply bypassed the prob-
lem by not discussing the issue of kinship to the Prophet's tribal group at all
and instead asserted that God had chosen the Ottoman dynasty to produce
caliphs.[713] Finally, although the earlier assumption that al-Mutawakkil III had
officially surrendered the caliphate to Selīm is rejected in more recent scholar-
ship,[714] the fact that for a long time such a transfer had been considered pos-
sible and had been explicitly propagated by modern Ottoman authors indicates
that al-Sharīf was not alone in viewing a handover of the caliphate feasible
when he wrote his account of al-Ghawrī's meeting with al-Mustamsik during
the *mawlid* of the Prophet. Peter M. Holt, unaware of the sources on al-Ghawrī's
majālis, argued as early as 1977 that although the "story […] that Selīm received
the caliphate from the last ʿAbbasid has been shown to be an eighteenth cen-
tury fabrication […] it may nevertheless be reminiscent of a doctrine at the end

711   Schimmel, Kalif 26–7; Schimmel, Glimpses 355. See also Tezcan, Hanafism 71; Holt, Struc-
      ture 45.
712   E.g., al-Ishbilī, *al-Durr al-muṣān* 2, 6; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 125; Ibn Zunbul, *Ghazwat al-Sulṭān*,
      fol. 1ᵛ (caliphal titles for Selīm after the conquest); Al-Tikriti, Treatise 742; Arnold, *Caliphate*
      138 (material predating the conquest).
713   Imber, *Ebu's-suʿud* 104–6; Gibb, Luṭfī Paşa. See also Berkey, *Formation* 264; Imber, Myth
      24–5; Imber, Süleymân; Imber, Ideals 152–3; Peirce, *Harem* 161; Hassan, *Longing* 9, 141;
      Kennedy, *Caliphate* 344–6; Karateke, Legitimizing 27–8; Yılmaz, *Caliphate* 2, 17–8, 61–2,
      80, 150, 166–7, 237; Veinstein, Origines 28–30.
714   Cf. already Becker, Studien 353, 399–403, 406–12; Arnold, *Caliphate* 142–8, 153–7. See also,
      e.g., Holt, Observations 507; Hassan, *Longing* 9–10; Veinstein, Origines 25–7.

of the Mamluk period."[715] The accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* constitute clear-cut evidence for the existence of such a doctrine postulated by Holt.

Taken together, the way the Ottomans dealt, more broadly, with al-Mutawakkil and the issue of the caliphate after the conquest was so similar to the course of action advocated at al-Ghawrī's court that one wonders whether the late Mamluk debates influenced the Ottoman approach. After all, members of the Ottoman ruling elite had participated in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and had access to their proceedings in the form of the *majālis* accounts brought to Istanbul. Without pointing to a specific text, Ulrich Haarmann suggested, in 1993, that "[t]he merger of the functions of [...] caliph and sultan [...] in political [...] theory that can be observed in Mamlūk times may well be seen as a model for the formation of the idea (and ideal) of the Ottoman sultan-caliph."[716]

Admittedly, a direct impact of Mamluk reconceptualizations of the caliphate on Ottoman political culture cannot be proven for the time being.[717] It is possible that the Ottoman elite arrived independently at more or less the same answers to the problem as the members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.[718] Yet, regardless of whether we are dealing with entanglements or parallel developments, it is clear that the solutions found in the communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court on the integration of the sultanate and the caliphate into one office continued to shape Islamicate history up to the first half of the fourteenth/twentieth century when the Ottoman caliphate ceased to exist.[719]

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715   Holt, Structure 46.

716   Haarmann, Miṣr 168.

717   Recent discussions of the Ottoman caliphate, such as Çıpa, *Making* 234–6; Yılmaz, *Caliphate*; do not refer to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*.

718   On the Ottoman caliphate, see, e.g., Berger, *Gesellschaft* 61–5; Hassan, *Longing* 9–13, 142–83; Kennedy, *Caliphate* 341–61; Sourdel, K̲h̲alīfa 945–7; Nagel, *Staat* ii, 172–86, 189, 192–206; Arnold, *Caliphate* 163–80.

719   Curiously, at the same time, when members of al-Ghawrī's court argued that the sultan was qualified to take over the caliphate, the Habsburg Emperor Maximilan I (r. as emperor 913–25/1508–19) sought ways to personally assume the papacy, cf. Creighton, *Papacy* v, 108–9; Wiesflecker, *Kaiser* iv, 91–6; v, 173–5; Wiesflecker, Beiträge; Tanner, *Descendant* 100–1, 107; Schulte, *Kaiser*; Ulmann, *Kaiser*. These structurally similar developments deserve further study from a comparative perspective.

6.3   Communicative Strategies of Courtly Representation and Legitimation of Rule

As seen in the preceding chapters, members of al-Ghawrī's court invested considerable cultural capital and time in primarily discursive communication intended to legitimate the sultan's rule vis-à-vis multiple audiences, such as the sultan himself, various circles of his court society, Mamluk society at large, rival rulers, and the members of other courts. Thereby, they constructed and disseminated a shared understanding of reality in which al-Ghawrī, as a matter of course, ruled supreme. Yet, even the most sophisticated theories about why al-Ghawrī's commands deserved obedience were of limited value as long as they only circulated as abstract ideas among a narrowly defined elite. The sultan's rule had to be represented and his position legitimated in ways that addressed broader audiences as well. To this end, al-Ghawrī and his court relied primarily not on discursive, but on symbolic and often performative modes of communication.

The important role of such non-discursive modes of communication is hardly surprising. As anthropologist David Kertzer argued with regard to the use of symbols and rituals in political culture, in all more complex human societies, "power must be expressed through symbolic guises."[720] Similarly, Norbert Elias noted that "[t]he people do not believe in power that may exist but is not visible in the appearance of the ruler. They must see in order to believe."[721] Kertzer further stated that "[p]olitical rites are important in all societies, because political power relations are everywhere expressed and modified through symbolic means of communication."[722] With regard to the political life of court societies in particular, Kertzer notes that "the image of [...] legitimacy is fostered through ritual."[723] As discussed in the introduction,[724] symbolic means were also especially important for premodern rulers whose ability to exercise more direct forms of control over their subjects was limited. Symbolic actions helped these rulers present the existing social configuration with its status differences as meaningful and stable, thus legitimating it through the creation of a "symbolic order."[725]

Given that this use of symbolic communication is present in developed human societies all around the world and that people in the pre- and early

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720   Kertzer, *Ritual* 174.
721   Elias, *Gesellschaft* 179, translation partly quoted from Elias, *Society*, trans. Jephcott 118.
722   Kertzer, *Ritual* 178.
723   Kertzer, *Ritual* 132.
724   Cf. section 1.2.3 above.
725   Melville, Spiele 183.

modern period "were [particularly] adept at communicating through ritual[s, symbols, and ceremonies], either by individual words and gestures [...] or by building conversations that grouped together many speeches, gestures, and events,"[726] it is noteworthy that its centrality to political culture of various pre- and early modern Islamicate societies was recognized only in rather recent studies published mainly from the 1990s onward. To give just two examples: Paula Sanders studied Fatimid processions and other courtly events as "dynamic process[es] through which claims to political and religious authority [...] may be articulated and in which complex negotiations of power may take place."[727] According to her, these events "expressed symbolically a developing set of assumptions about authority, rule, and rulers."[728] Similarly, Jenny Rahel Oesterle noted in her study of Fatimid processions that "rituals possess great meaningfulness regarding rule. For rituals manage in particular to make rule present in a scenic and symbolic manner in a special way."[729]

In contrast to the work done on Fatimid political culture,[730] research on Mamluk political communication by means of rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic practices is still in its infancy, although it is generally recognized that "the Mamluk regime needed regal traditions to emphasize the royal status of the former slaves and to demonstrate continuity."[731] Hence Jo van Steenbergen's recent remark that "the ritual aspect of Mamluk political culture remains poorly understood"[732] bears reiteration. Thanks to the available sources, the case of al-Ghawrī's court offers a particularly promising opportunity to address this gap in our knowledge of Mamluk political culture and scrutinize the primarily symbolic communicative practices under one particular Mamluk ruler in greater depth.

The following sections explore what kinds of messages were communicated by whom, in what ways, and to which audiences in order to represent and legitimate al-Ghawrī's rule. They show that just as in the largely discursive communication about rulership and political theory analyzed above, members of the sultan's court relied on inherited forms of political communication, but were also able to innovatively reinterpret them and devise novel strategies to transmit their messages. Furthermore, they demonstrate how the

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726   DeSilva, Possession 7.
727   Sanders, *Ritual* 5.
728   Sanders, *Ritual* 15.
729   Oesterle, *Kalifat* 365.
730   See section 1.2.4 above for further relevant studies.
731   Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 25.
732   Van Steenbergen, Ritual 227. See also section 1.2.4 above.

sultan and his court relied on various communicative means to address diverse audiences—an insight which implies that a single observer, such as Ibn Iyās, might have failed to appreciate the court's communicative efforts in their entirety. Moreover, the following sections reveal that unlike other Islamicate rulers, such as the almost invisible later Ottoman sultans, al-Ghawrī was a key agent in these representational and legitimating activities that in part aimed at maximizing his visibility outside the courtly sphere.[733]

The following sections necessarily only offer a selective analysis of relevant communicative practices with a focus on those representative and legitimating activities on which our sources provide sufficient material for thick descriptions[734] and detailed interpretative examinations. Hence, other courtly events that must have been of considerable importance for the representation of al-Ghawrī's rule but are not discussed in detail in our sources, such as, for example, the ruler's investiture, are not analyzed in depth. Moreover, the sultan's bestowal of robes of honor on members of his court is only discussed in passing because Carl Petry and others have already studied this topic in considerable detail.[735]

Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* constitute the first subject of our analysis of communicative strategies of courtly representation and legitimation. Thereafter, we turn to modes of communication primarily based on the creation, manipulation, and perception of material objects including architectural structures and coins. The third subsection is dedicated to courtly events of great performative communicative significance, such as parades, feasts, and celebrations, while the final subsection scrutinizes the symbolic, representative, and legitimating functions of literary production and the book arts at al-Ghawrī's court.

6.3.1   *The Salons*

Al-Ghawrī's *majālis* played an important role in the representation and legitimation of the sultan's rule. The sultan and those around him used these events to present al-Ghawrī as a well-lettered, cultivated, and pious ruler who stood in the tradition of earlier revered political leaders. Employing both discursive and symbolic communicative means, the members of the *majālis* conveyed these messages to multiple key audiences, including the sultan—who regularly engaged in practices of self-legitimation as discussed by Barker,— select members of his courtly elite, and members of other court societies.

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733   See also Fuess, Between 149–50, 164; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 33.
734   On "thick description," see Geertz, Description 5–10.
735   Petry, Robing, *passim*; Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḫilʿa* 212, 216, 224.

Thereby, they also established and confirmed a shared understanding of the world, leading to the creation of a common social reality.

The audiences targeted by the *majālis* were of central importance in the sultan's efforts to legitimate his exalted position as ruler and lay claim to even more distinguished ranks, such as those of *imām*, caliph, or *mujaddid*, as discussed in preceding chapters. While there is no need to repeat our findings here, we must address one potential objection to this interpretation that sees the *majālis* also, though not exclusively, as part of a strategy of political representation and legitimation. As courtly events, the *majālis* suffered prima facie from an important drawback, namely, that their direct audience was quite limited, even among members of the courtly elite—and necessarily so, given that strict control on who could attend the sultan's salons was part of what defined their character. It was only by maintaining a secluded atmosphere that the sultan and those around him could engage in rather open discursive exchanges without risk of compromising their reputation among their subjects. Consequently, the proceedings of the *majālis* were, at least in part, understood to be confidential and there is no evidence that the accounts of the *majālis* circulated beyond the limits of the sultan's court society.[736]

According to Rodney Barker's work discussed above, al-Ghawrī must have sought to gain legitimacy primarily in his own eyes, in the view of the elite members of his court, and at rival courts. Hence, it is fitting that the circle of attendees at the *majālis* was largely limited to members of these groups. Nevertheless, we may ask whether the *majālis* may also have had a positive impact on broader segments of the population who were not allowed to attend them. Three sources suggest that people who were not members of the courtly elite might have had at least some general knowledge about what took place in the sultan's *majālis*, and this might indeed have influenced al-Ghawrī's image beyond the narrow circle of participants.

The epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* praises the sultan's *majālis* at length and provides its readers with general information on their make-up and topics.[737] Hence, Ottoman Turkish-speaking audiences in the Mamluk realm could rely on this text to learn about the events. However, we must acknowledge that *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* was the work of one of the sultan's personal clients and does not reflect the state of information of broader segments of the Mamluk population. Moreover, we do not know whether and to what extent this text circulated beyond courtly audiences in Mamluk times. Finally, the number of people in

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736   Cf. section 4.1.1 above.
737   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1990–2.

the Mamluk realm who could read a very long Ottoman Turkish text but were not associated with the court was probably rather limited. Hence, the description of the *majālis* in *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* most probably did not contribute significantly to an increase in popular knowledge about the sultan's salons.

With regard to the historiographical works of Ibn al-Ḥanbalī and Ibn Iyās that likewise point to al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, the situation is different. Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, based in Syria, knew enough about the sultan's salons to include information in his biography of al-Ghawrī about their existence, their timing, and their participants. This indicates that basic information about these events was available to a non-Egyptian author who had no connection with the Mamluk court at all.[738] From this, we may conclude that many people in the Mamluk territories had at least some rudimentary knowledge about the existence of the *majālis*.

The case of Ibn Iyās corroborates this finding. As discussed above, Ibn Iyās lacked regular direct access to the court and often relied on rumors and hearsay when writing about its internal affairs.[739] Nevertheless, his chronicle includes rather detailed data, such as the information that ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna was among the sultan's intimates who met with the sultan regularly three times a week at the citadel.[740] Moreover, when referring to the sultan's *majālis*, the chronicler mentions musical performances as well as the reading of literary texts, historical works, and collections of biographies.[741] This shows that Ibn Iyās was informed about the location of the *majālis*, their schedule, their attendees, and their general content.

Taken together, this evidence indicates that inhabitants of the Mamluk Sultanate who did not belong to the sultan's court society or his household were aware that al-Ghawrī regularly met some of the leading scholars of the realm at the Cairo Citadel several nights a week to discuss scholarly matters. Yet, what did this mean to them?

To answer this question, we must turn to the theoretical literature on good rulership that blossomed in al-Ghawrī's time. The code of conduct that these works recommend was far from uniform, but among the most common elements of advice was that rulers should meet with the *ʿulamāʾ* and the *fuḍalāʾ* (people learned in literature and language) of their realm, preferably according to a regular schedule. The pertinent passage in the mirror-for-princes *Ādāb al-mulūk* written for al-Ghawrī reads:

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738   Cf. sections 3.1.5, 3.2.2 and 4.1.1 above.
739   Cf. section 2.1.1 above.
740   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 470.
741   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 89.

He [that is, the ruler] should allot time slots [to his activities]. The kings of old divided the days into four parts: one part for worshiping God and obeying Him, one part for looking into the affairs of the realm and doing justice for the oppressed, one part for sitting with the *ʿulamāʾ* and the *fuḍalāʾ* and managing affairs and governing the populace, and one part for recreation and taking pleasure from merrymaking, delights, hunting, playing, and suchlike.[742]

Ibn al-Aʿraj's mirror-for-princes *Taḥrīr al-sulūk fī tadbīr al-mulūk* even counts regular interaction with the knowledgeable and the pious among the ten duties rulers must fulfill:

The eighth [duty]: Engaging the services of the skilled and those who are trustworthy and pious and relying on righteous and steadfast advisers, so that the affairs are [well] considered and precisely regulated thanks to their ability, and [well] maintained and attended to thanks to their trustworthiness and good advice.[743]

In its fourth chapter on "the excellence of the *ʿulamāʾ*, bestowing honors on them and paying reference to them," Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn's *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* elevates the same advice to a religious level.[744] Among other elements, the treatise urges al-Ghawrī, as its intended reader and dedicatee, to refer to the *ʿulamāʾ* for knowledge of things of which he is ignorant, according to Q 16:43,[745] and to sit with the *ʿulamāʾ* to have his heart revived by their wisdom, as one of the included *ḥadīth*s stipulates.[746]

Yet, it was not only texts originating from al-Ghawrī's court that called on rulers to spend time with scholars. For example, we also find this recommendation in Ibn Jamāʿa's above-mentioned work of legal advice,[747] which states that rulers must "grant an exalted position to knowledge and the *ʿulamāʾ* [...], mingle with the most learned *ʿulamāʾ* who are sincere toward the religion of Islam and must seek their advice in matters of legal rulings and the sources

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742   Anonymous, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, fols. 12ᵛ–13ᵛ; Muhannā (ed.), *Ādāb al-mulūk* 7. See also Sadan, Division 259.

743   Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 27.

744   Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 69. See also Āl Saʿūd (ed.), *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* 42–5.

745   Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 69.

746   Ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, *Mawāhib al-laṭīf* 77.

747   See section 6.2.3 above.

for [their] repeal."[748] Elsewhere in his text, Ibn Jamāʿa writes that "the sultan should consult with the *ʿulamāʾ* who perform [good deeds] and are sincere toward God, His Messenger, and the Muslims and rely on them in [issuing] his legal rulings, repeals, and confirmations."[749] The mirror-for-princes attributed to the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk is even more specific when prescribing that rulers must not only consult the *ʿulamāʾ* regularly, but also sit with them once or twice a week to receive instruction in jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis, the study of prophetic traditions, and history. Moreover, rulers should hold scholarly debates and inquire with the *ʿulamāʾ* about all things the rulers are unfamiliar with.[750]

The list of examples could easily be extended;[751] it is clear that the pertinent literature reflects a widespread conviction that to be an ideal and legitimate Muslim ruler, one had to meet regularly with the *ʿulamāʾ* and host learned discussions.[752] Or, as Jan-Peter Hartung noted, "it was the interaction of rulers with the *ʿulamāʾ* [...] that provided at least one way of defining and reaffirming the legitimacy of political rule."[753] These insights indicate that even if no one beyond a small segment of the courtly elite could report exactly what took place in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, the simple and—according to Ibn Iyās and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī—widely known fact that the sultan met regularly with the *ʿulamāʾ* according to a fixed schedule was in itself sufficient to play an important role in al-Ghawrī's efforts to legitimate his rule in light of the prevalent standards of Islamicate political thought in his time.

In addition, it is noteworthy that several works belonging to the mirrors-for-princes tradition emphasize that the ruler should allot a precisely measured amount of time to his consultations with the *ʿulamāʾ*.[754] This observation may help us to explain one of the more curious features of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, namely, the fact that this text, as seen above, includes very precise and detailed information on how long a given *majlis* hosted by al-Ghawrī lasted.[755] Against the background of the mirrors-for-princes tradition, the pres-

748   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 361; [part 2] 48. See also Rosenthal, *Thought* 49; al-Azmeh, *Kingship* 103; Marlow, Kings 113–4.

749   Ibn Jamāʿa in Kofler (ed. and trans.), Handbuch [part 1] 364; [part 2] 52.

750   Nagel, *Staat* ii, 88. See also Rosenthal, *Thought* 82.

751   For additional examples, see, e.g., Marlow, Kings 113–6; Lambton, Mirrors 427; Tor, Islamisation 120; Rosenthal, *Thought* 65; Lambton, *State* 188–90; Leder, Aspekte 130–1; Griffith, Life 141; and with a focus on political councils, see Paul, Counsel 107–8, 115–6.

752   See also Marlow, Kings 114–6.

753   Hartung, Enacting 295.

754   E.g., Ibn al-Aʿraj, *Taḥrīr al-sulūk* 35–6. On this notion, see Sadan, Division; Marlow, Performances 75–6.

755   See section 4.1.1 above.

ence of this information could be interpreted as a narrative strategy indicating that al-Ghawrī followed the advice given in contemporaneous political literature and carefully monitored how much time he spent on what kinds of activity.[756]

Notwithstanding the largely speculative character of this last point, there can be no doubt that al-Ghawrī used the *majālis* in support of his efforts to represent and legitimate his supreme position, both with regard to elite audiences and his subjects at large. This observation deserves special attention from a comparative perspective, given that the patronage of scholarship is recognized as a central representational and legitimating practice of courtly rule in Islamicate[757] and other contexts[758]—particularly for rulers who lacked genealogical legitimacy.[759] These representational and legitimating functions of courtly patronage constitute a promising subject for inter- and transcultural court studies whose analytical potential remains hitherto largely untapped.[760]

6.3.2 *Construction Activities and Coinage*

In a now classical study on the architecture of Mamluk Cairo, Stephen R. Humphreys argued that all architecture carries communicative significance and seeks to signify a certain meaning.[761] Understanding architecture as a "form of communication"[762] with "a certain metaphorical quality,"[763] Humphreys was interested in studying the "values and ideas"[764] that the person responsible for the shape of a given building wanted to communicate, that is, its "expressive intent."[765]

Humphreys suggested that the expressive intent of Mamluk buildings followed essentially the wishes of their patrons and commissioners.[766] He characterized the expressive intent of much of Mamluk architecture as follows:

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756 This raises the question how al-Sharīf's information on the duration of the *majālis* is connected to what he experienced during these events. Given the absence of parallel sources, we can only note that al-Sharīf's data appear plausible, do not exhibit discernible patterns, and lack obvious symbolic dimensions.

757 Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 132–3. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal ii, 46–7.

758 Winterling, Versuch 86.

759 Butz and Dannenberg, Überlegungen 31.

760 On the connection between patronage and political legitimation, see also Markiewicz, *Crisis* 54.

761 Humphreys, Intent 71.

762 Humphreys, Intent 75.

763 Humphreys, Intent 73.

764 Humphreys, Intent 74.

765 Humphreys, Intent 74.

766 Humphreys, Intent 78–9.

> [It was] an architecture which manifested (and was intended to mani-
> fest) the glory and strength of Sunnī Islam, but also that Islam had been
> placed under the aegis of the Mamluk *amīr*s and the state which they
> embodied.[767]

> In their major constructions, and even in many of their lesser ones, the
> Mamluks appear to be attempting monuments which will dramatically
> impress themselves upon the senses of the beholder and force him to take
> notice of them.[768]

At the same time, Humphreys argued that Mamluk patrons had no particular
need for architecture serving their ceremonial needs:

> The point of these [Mamluk] ceremonies was to focus attention on the
> practical role of the Sultan through a set of ritualized and symbolic acts.
> In all this, the architectural setting had no symbolic value beyond suggest-
> ing the power and grandeur of the state. […] [O]ne is led to recognize that
> for the Mamluks, palace architecture was not a necessary or even useful
> expression of their ideology of kingship.[769]

Humphreys' work deserves credit as the first consistent and comprehensive
approach to Mamluk architecture that paid sufficient attention to its com-
municative function and symbolic meaning. Yet, when reviewed several dec-
ades later, Humphreys' analysis of the impressive intent of Mamluk buildings
appears to overgeneralize in its attempt to arrive at conclusions valid for the
entirety of structures erected over the course of more than two and one-half
centuries. Moreover, Humphreys' arguments regarding the symbolic function
of architecture that was directly connected to Mamluk practices of rule can
no longer be upheld, given what we know today about the significance of non-
discursive communication for Mamluk court life and political culture.[770]

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767 Humphreys, Intent 80.
768 Humphreys, Intent 97. See also Humphreys, Intent 98–9.
769 Humphreys, Intent 88.
770 Since the publication of Humphreys' article, the study of Mamluk architecture has de-
       veloped into a veritable subfield that cannot be surveyed here. For a still useful overview,
       see Bloom, Mamluk Art, esp. 36–45; and on the debate caused by Humphreys, see van
       Steenbergen, Ritual 231. For recent studies of the communicative significance of Mamluk
       architecture, see, e.g., Luz, Icons; Troadec, Baybars; Mulder, Mausoleum; Flinterman and
       van Steenbergen, Formation.

Al-Ghawrī's reign and its practices of courtly patronage offer a particularly good case for studying the expressive intent of Mamluk architecture and its communicative functions, given that this sultan erected numerous structures across the Mamluk realm; these belonged to diverse architectural types, served various functions, and carried multiple symbolic meanings. Above, we have reviewed al-Ghawrī's support of religiously significant architecture.[771] Here, we focus on his other projects that did not carry primarily religious significance. Even when limited to these kinds of projects, the list of structures built on the sultan's behalf or with his support is quite long and justifies al-Ghawrī's reputation in the Arabic historiographical tradition as "a lover of building activities (ʿimāra)."[772] His major projects included:[773]

(a)   the renovation of several structures within the southern enclosure of the Cairo Citadel and the building of a loggia (maqʿad) there in addition to the dikka mentioned above,[774]

(b)   the construction of an aqueduct and an intake tower with water wheels to improve the water supply of the citadel by providing water from the Nile,[775]

(c)   the landscaping of a park-cum-hippodrome (maydān) below the Cairo Citadel, which was connected to the aqueduct via channels and water wheels,[776]

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771   Cf. section 5.2.2 above.

772   Al-ʿĀṣimī, Samṭ al-nujūm iv, 61. See also Salīm, al-Ghūrī 173–4.

773   Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ v, 93–5, provides a comprehensive list of al-Ghawrī's building activities, including minor structures not mentioned here. See also Meinecke, Architektur ii, 449–71.

774   Al-Malaṭī, Nuzhat 157; Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 67–8, 80–1, 123, 165; v, 91, 94. See also Rabbat, Citadel 295; Alhamzah, Patronage 48–9; Petry, Protectors 115; Pradines, Fortifications 44–5; al-Malaṭī, al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī, fol. 9ʳ; Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi iii, 1998–2001; al-Sharīf, Nafāʾis (MS) 250; (ed. ʿAzzām) 126–7; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 45–6, 53, 55, 58–9; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 79; Meinecke, Architektur ii, 454, 456, 459, 464, 471; Salīm, al-Ghūrī 93.

775   Rabbat, Citadel 196–8. See also Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt al-dhahab viii, 114, 126–7, 132–3, 137–8; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, Mutʿat al-adhhān i, 322; Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ iv, 110, 137; al-Karmī, Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn 160; al-Malaṭī, al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī, fol. 8ᵛ; Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), Voyage 203–4; Mubārak, al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya i, 130; Tamari, Inscription 187; Alhamzah, Patronage 49; Glick, Aqueduct; Pradines, Fortifications 45; Rabbat, History 47; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 80; Meinecke, Architektur ii, 459.

776   Tamari, Inscription 176, 187; Rabbat, Citadel 198 (for the aqueduct). See also, e.g., Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt al-dhahab viii, 114; Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, Mutʿat al-adhhān i, 322; Behrens-Abouseif, Gardens 307–8; Meinecke, Architektur ii, 453, 461–2, 468; Salīm, al-Ghūrī 90–2.

(d)   the construction of an inn (*wakala*) and related structures in the commercial area of Cairo known today as al-Khān al-Khalīlī,[777]

(e)   a complete redevelopment of the Nilometer area on the Nile island of al-Rawḍa, including the renovation of the Nilometer itself and the construction of a hall and other structures,[778]

(f)   the recultivation of the balsam garden of al-Maṭariyya north of Cairo and the construction of edifices there,[779]

(g)   the overhaul or construction of fortifications throughout the realm, including in Jidda,[780] Alexandria,[781] Damascus,[782] Aleppo,[783] Rosetta,[784] Suez,[785] Ṭūr,[786] Ṭīna,[787] and Yanbūʿ,[788] in addition to the military structures along the pilgrimage route discussed above, and

(h)   the renovation of several bridges in and around Cairo.[789]

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777   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 230, 237, 243, 404–5; v, 94. See also Seif, Works; al-Imam, Les waqfs; Petry, *Protectors* 164; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 62, 89–90; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 49–50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 466–7; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 93–4.

778   Popper, *Nilometer* 27–8. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94; Tamari, Inscription 187; Petry, *Twilight* 160; Petry, *Protectors* 164; Garcin, Regime 313; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 79; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 94.

779   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 149, 311, 325, 327–8, 338–9, 381. See also Thenaud, Voyage, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 55; Suriano, *Treatise* 195; Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 201–3; Martyr, *Legatio* 304–11, 352–4; Baumgarten, Travels 332; Africanus, *History* iii, 879; Petry, *Protectors* 119; Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 79–80; Behrens-Abouseif, Gardens 308–9; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 467–8.

780   Al-ʿĀṣimī, *Samṭ al-nujūm* iv, 64–5. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 321–2; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 95; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Iʿlām* iii, 244–5; Tamari, Inscription 187; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 456.

781   Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 322; Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya* i, 130; al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 160; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 95; Tamari, Inscription 187; Pardines, Fortifications 34–5; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 464.

782   Sobernheim, Inschriften 25–8.

783   Gonnella, Inside 229, 231. See also Pardines, Fortifications 55; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 449, 455–6, 458, 462, 464.

784   Pardines, Fortifications 36. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94–5; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 469.

785   Pardines, Fortifications 46. See also al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 9ʳ; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 366.

786   Pardines, Fortifications 53.

787   Pardines, Fortifications 39. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 159; v, 94; Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 462.

788   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 96. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 471.

789   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 94. See also Alhamzah, *Patronage* 50; Meinecke, *Architektur* ii, 466–7.

An exhaustive analysis of these manifold aspects of al-Ghawrī's sponsorship of non-religious architecture clearly goes beyond the confines of the present work. Moreover, such a thorough review of the sultan's building activities is not necessary to answer our research questions, especially because we can rely on a sizable body of earlier scholarship on many of these architectural undertakings. However, thus far, al-Ghawrī's construction of a park-*cum*-hippodrome (*maydān*) below the Cairo Citadel has received very limited scholarly attention, despite its pivotal importance for our understanding of ceremonial life and courtly events under this sultan. The present section focuses on this project as a case study of the communicative significance of the sultan's construction activities.

Ibn Iyās' chronicle describes the beginning of the construction of the *maydān* as follows:

> In it [that is, Ṣafar 909/July–August 1503], the sultan began with the construction of the *maydān* below the citadel. He had its outer walls made higher, and had lots of clay (*ṭīn*) put on its ground—four cubits [thick]. He did this on the western side of the *maydān*. Then, he had its ground leveled and paved it with chiseled stones (*naqqāra*).[790] Thereafter, he began with the construction of a loggia (*maqʿad*) and a house (*bayt*) in the *maydān* for the purpose of holding trials. On the western side of the *maydān*, he built a splendid elevated structure (*qaṣr*),[791] a pavilion (*manẓara*),[792] a lake, and other magnificent structures.
>
> Then he began to have every kind of fruit tree and [various] types of flowers and aromatic plants and other things brought. They were planted on the eastern side of the *maydān*. Then he let water flow to it from the water wheel (*sāqiya*) that was at the Bāb al-Qarāfa[793] and also let water flow to it from the water wheel that was at Ḥadarat al-Baqar.[794] Then he built an elevated structure (*qaṣr*) at the gate of the *maydān* facing al-Ramla,[795] and he had a passage made from the citadel to the *maydān*;

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790 Translation based on Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 206.

791 Translation based on Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 66.

792 In Mamluk parlance *manẓara* denoted "primarily a pavilion in a pleasance garden with numerous openings […] [with] the basic function as a place from where one looks out," Rabbat, *Citadel* 165.

793 A gate close to the citadel on the way to the main cemetery area, cf. Rabbat, *Citadel* 194.

794 A locality west of the citadel behind the Sultan Ḥasan Madrasa, cf. Rabbat, *Citadel* 106.

795 An area known today as al-Rumayla and located directly to the west of the citadel, cf. Rabbat, *Citadel* 22–3, 277–9.

[the passage] consisted entirely of stairs [leading] to this elevated structure facing al-Ramla. He equipped the *maydān* with a large gate with an iron chain and next to it also with a small gate that had an iron chain like the large gate. [...]

It was said that from its beginning to its completion the sultan spent around 80,000 *dīnār*s on the construction of this *maydān*. But in the course of the construction of this *maydān*, noteworthy things happened to him that had not happened to any of the rulers before him. Most of his processions (*mawākib*) took place there. He had noteworthy legal trials and remarkable times there that will be spoken about in their [respective] places.[796]

In a passage dated to the end of 915/early 1510, Ibn Iyās provides further details on the *maydān*:

In this year, the trees that the sultan had planted in the *maydān* ripened and the flowers that he had planted there blossomed, including roses, jasmines, Egyptian willows, lilies, licorices, and other rare flowers. One could see there a white rose with a fragrant smell. It did not belong to the varieties of roses [found] in Egypt, but had been brought from Syria. It used to open in summertime when the Nile was rising with full force. It was a foreign species that did not exist in Egypt.

The sultan used to have a large bench (*dikka*) inlaid with ivory and ebony set up for him. A seat cushion of velvet with a leather mat was put on top of it and the sultan used to sit on it. Branches of jasmine provided him with shade and around him stood good-looking *mamlūk*s with fly whiskers in their hands driving away flies for him.

In the trees hung cages in which birds that were [pleasant] to listen to [perched], including crossbills, ringdoves, nightingales, thrushes, turtledoves, common cuckoos, and other birds that are [pleasant] to listen to. Between the trees, white-breasted guineafowls, mandarin ducks, partridges, and various other birds wandered at large.

Sometimes [the sultan] sat by the lake that is forty cubits long and is filled every day with Nile water by the water wheels that take [water] from the aqueduct which carries [water] day and night.

He sat there most Fridays on a throne (*sarīr*) and only those *amīr*s that he had chosen were allowed to come to him. He experienced [there]

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796   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 56. See also Ayalon, Notes 43–4.

> amazing and charming things that no other sultan had experienced. This *maydān* became a paradise (*janna*) on the face of the Earth.[797]

In addition to these passages, Ibn Iyās dedicates several pages of his chronicle to a collection of praise poems extolling the beauty of the sultan's garden.[798] Al-Malaṭī's *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* likewise applauds the construction of the *maydān* at length, considering it the sultan's second most important architectural project after his funeral complex.[799] Al-Malaṭī pays special attention to the large variety of imported trees and flowers planted in the *maydān*, as well as its buildings and its artificial lake, "the like of which has not been seen in this age."[800]

In the epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, the discussion of the sultan's *maydān* is among the most lengthy sections, covering more than four pages in modern print.[801] The text focuses on the deplorable state of the space below the citadel before the sultan's intervention; it is described as a desert of dust and salt which, thanks to al-Ghawrī, was transformed into a "paradise" (*firdevs*).[802] The anonymous work *al-Majalis al-marḍiyya* dedicates several passages to the *maydān* and courtly events there, making it one of the primary topics of the entire text.[803] Finally, the first-person narrator of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* praises the *maydān* at length in the context of a *majlis* dedicated to the sultan's architectural projects, giving it pride of place as the first construction project he mentions.[804]

Together, these sources provide us with detailed information on the location and design of the *maydān*. It was located directly below the western flank of the citadel in the direction of the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque and the greater city of Cairo.[805] The same locality had been used as a military training ground for centuries— at least since the time of Ibn Ṭūlūn—when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad constructed there a full-fledged hippodrome in the early eighth/fourteenth century that adjoined the stable area of the citadel and was surrounded by walls on its south-

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797   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 172–3.

798   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 173–6.

799   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 8ᵛ.

800   Al-Malaṭī, *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī*, fol. 8ᵛ.

801   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1994–8. See also D'hulster, Sitting 253–4.

802   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* iii, 1996.

803   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 192ᵛ–194, 270ᵛ–284ᵛ, 309ᵛ, 318ᵛ–319ᵛ.

804   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 250; (ed. ʿAzzām) 126.

805   Cf. the map in Rabbat, *Citadel* 197.

ern, western, and northern sides.[806] This earlier *maydān* consisted of an open
area on which grass grew with trees along its sides and a water infrastructure for
irrigation.[807] It fell into disuse during the last decades of the eighth/fourteenth
century and renovation attempts in the early ninth/fifteenth century could not
prevent its eventual decay.[808]

In the construction of his hippodrome, al-Ghawrī built on this earlier archi-
tectural tradition. Ibn Iyās' statement that al-Ghawrī had the walls of the *may-
dān* "made higher" (*ʿallā*) suggests that the sultan utilized whatever was left
of earlier construction phases in the area. A passage in al-Malaṭī's *Nuzhat
al-asāṭīn* which speaks of al-Ghawrī as "renovating" (*yujaddidu*) the *maydān*
states something similiar.[809] As in the case of earlier, similar projects in greater
Cairo,[810] the sultan had clay spread out evenly on the surface of the western
part of the *māydan*, apparently to prepare it for cavalry exercises. Although
not explicitly stated by Ibn Iyās, we may assume that grass was sown in this
area, as was the case with earlier Egyptian hippodromes.[811] The open space of
the *maydān* must have been quite large, given that a member of a Venetian
embassy stated that it covered twice the area of the Piazza San Marco of his
home city.[812] *Al-Majalis al-marḍiyya* states that the total surface area of the
maydān was "close to twenty *faddān*,"[813] equal to about 109,000 square meters,
that is, more than fifteen standard soccer fields or twenty American football
fields.[814]

Yet, al-Ghawrī was not satisfied with creating just a standard hippodrome,
that is, an open grass field surrounded by auxiliary buildings and enclosed by a
wall or a fence that served mainly as a playing field for polo (*kura*)[815] and related
equestrian and military activities. Rather, the sultan transformed the layout of

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806   Rabbat, *Citadel* 194. See also Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 53; Ayalon, Notes 40–1; Levanoni, *Point*
         158–60; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 740–1. On earlier *maydān*s, see Rabbat, *Citadel* 76, 102,
         152, 194; Rabbat, History 45–6; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 65; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 739.
807   Rabbat, *Citadel* 195.
808   Ayalon, Notes 41. See also Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 53–4.
809   Al-Malaṭī, *Nuzhat* 156.
810   Rabbat, *Citadel* 195.
811   Rabbat, History 45, argues that all *maydān*s were covered with grass.
812   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 190, 195.
813   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 271ᵛ.
814   Fernandes, *Evolution* 120, 142, gives the size of one *faddān* as approximately 5,464 m².
815   On *maydān*s as polo grounds, see Rabbat, *Citadel* 194; Rabbat, *Staging* 8; ʿAbd ar-Rāziq,
         Jeux 110; Frenkel, Narratives 424; Rabbat, Militarization 4. On polo as a favorite Mam-
         luk military game, see ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, Jeux 107–30; Loiseau, *Mamelouks* 155–6; Ayalon,
         Notes 53–5; Stowasser, Manners 19; al-Sarraf, Literature 190–2; al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 87; Gar-
         cin, Regime 304; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 47; Bresc, Entrées 84.

the hippodrome into a large-scale building and landscape project, leading one Ottoman historian to refer to it as "the garden below the citadel."[816] Ibn Iyās mentions at least six different structures within the *maydān* area: a loggia and a house (in an unspecified locality) dedicated to legal purposes, an elevated structure and a pavilion on the flank of the area facing Cairo, and another elevated structure, as well as a gate structure on the side closest to the citadel.[817] Through the gate structure, the sultan could access the *maydān* directly from the citadel via a newly established staircase. In addition to these buildings, al-Ghawrī equipped his *maydān* with a water supply system that served both irrigation and recreational purposes and provided the artificial lake of the *maydān* with water.[818]

The eastern part of the *maydān* was planted with various kinds of trees, flowers, and herbs.[819] In addition, cages with songbirds were placed in the trees, while larger species of birds ran free throughout the area.[820] While many of the animals and plants seem to have been of local stock, others, such as the white roses of Syrian provenance that caught Ibn Iyās' attention, and the East Asian mandarin ducks (sg. *baṭṭ ṣīnī*) must have been imported, probably at considerable cost. In another passage, Ibn Iyās describes how about 250 loads of wooden boxes filled with flowers and tree saplings for the *maydān* arrived from Syria, with some of the plants coming from even further east, namely, from a region the chronicler referred to as "India" (*Hind*).[821]

Al-Ghawrī invested substantial economic capital in the construction of his *maydān*. The 80,000 *dīnār*s that Ibn Iyās mentions is forty times the generous monthly stipend that al-Ghawrī granted the Ottoman prince Qurqud and his retinue. This suggests that even for the courtly elite, 80,000 *dīnār*s was an extraordinarily large sum.[822]

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816   Al-Karmī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓirīn* 159.

817   On the buildings on the *maydān*, see also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 272ʳ–272ᵛ, 280ᵛ–281ᵛ.

818   On water infrastructure, see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 137–8; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 66; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 271ʳ–271ᵛ.

819   On gardens and green spaces in pre- and early modern Cairo, see Rabbat, History; Behrens-Abouseif, Gardens; Brookes, *Gardens* 168, 177–80.

820   See also Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 272ʳ. On caged birds in the Mamluk period, see Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 76–7.

821   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 102. On imported plants, see also Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Mibrad, and Ibn Munlā, *Mutʿat al-adhhān* i, 378; and on the flora of the *maydān*, see Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 190; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 271ᵛ–272ʳ.

822   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 167, 186–7. On the costs of comparable projects, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 48–9.

How can we explain al-Ghawrī's heavy investment in garden architecture, which does not seem to have been part of a larger program of urban renewal, but was focused on one specific locality? The sultan's personal preferences were apparently an important motive for the construction of the *maydān* and its rich furnishings with trees and flowers. Ibn Iyās indicates that the sultan used his garden regularly for recreational purposes, as a secluded refuge in which he could enjoy himself amidst the artificial paradise he had created. This fits in well with Ibn Iyās' characterization of the sultan as a person who "used to love seeing flowers and fruits […] and was passionately fond of planting trees […], of listening to twittering birds and of smelling fragrant flowers and incense."[823]

The accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provide further details on his fondness of flowers and offer an explanation of its underlying causes. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* recounts a lengthy conversation initiated by the sultan on the special qualities and medicinal uses of the narcissus.[824] This indicates that al-Ghawrī's botanical interests went beyond the aesthetic enjoyment of flowers and included scholarly approaches.[825]

Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya explains how the sultan's love for flowers and trees came about: According to this text, the future sultan, then a slave, fell severely ill on his way to Egypt. He and his fellow travelers were forced to adjourn for almost a month in an inn close to a field full of trees. There, the sultan recovered rather quickly. *Al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* links this development to the sultan's natural disposition (*ṭabʿ*) that had an affinity for plants—probably because of his childhood in the relative wilderness of Circassia, although the text does not state this explicitly.[826]

Yet, this explanation of the construction of the *maydān* as merely a result of the sultan's personal preferences is too simplistic, especially given that it served numerous other functions in addition to the ruler's recreation and enjoyment. Ibn Iyās' chronicle abounds in references to the *maydān* and its multiple purposes which, for the sake of presentation, we can group into four categories, although in many instances, this space served more than one purpose at a time. The four categories of purposes are: (a) military, (b) legal, (c) religious, and (d) ceremonial and ritual.

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823   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 88.

824   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 263–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 81–3.

825   The presence of a multi-volume copy of Ibn Waḥshīya's *al-Filāḥa al-Nabaṭiyya* (The Nabatean agriculture) in the sultan's library supports this interpretation. The copy is preserved as MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1989 [non vidi], cf. Karatay, *Yazmalar kataloğu* iii, 790–1; Shopov, Books 558.

826   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 64ʳ–64ᵛ.

(a)   Al-Ghawrī's *maydān* fulfilled the traditional functions of a Mamluk hip-
podrome in terms of the training, upkeep, and management of the Mam-
luk cavalry forces. The *maydān* provided the necessary space for Mam-
luk soldiers to perfect their skills in armed horsemanship (*furūsiyya*) by
playing polo—often together with the sultan and his highest *amīr*s[827]—,
training exercises with lances,[828] or target shooting while on horse-
back.[829] The *maydān*, which apparently offered much more free space
than the *ḥawsh* of the citadel, was also used for troop reviews[830] and the
distribution of the army's payment.[831] Thus, to a considerable degree, the
maydān was a military space.[832]

(b)   As the construction of buildings destined for the holding of trials indic-
ated, the sultan also used his *maydān* to dispense justice. Ibn Iyās men-
tions several instances in which the sultan performed his judicial duties
there.[833] In one case, he explicitly noted that the sultan held a "general
audience" (*julūs ʿāmm*) to pass judgments, and this audience appears to
have taken an entire Monday morning.[834] Another report implies that
during such legal sessions, the sultan was surrounded by large groups of
spectators.[835] Such a broad and general attendance of the judicial hear-
ings in the *maydān* would hardly have been possible within the citadel.

(c)   Ibn Iyās mentions in passing the construction of a small Friday mosque
close to the *maydān*,[836] though this structure did not play an import-
ant role in the religious life of the court. Rather, the *maydān* itself con-
stituted space for courtly religious occasions and meritorious activities.
These included practices related to the pilgrimage, such as the inspection
of the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal*,[837] the distribution of alms,[838] and events

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827   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 181–2, 214–5, 220, 263, 265, 372, 376, 453, 455.
828   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 60, 158, 180, 182, 201, 229–30, 446.
829   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 151, 182, 449.
830   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 193, 257, 308, 311, 412–3, 435, 466–7; v, 15, 24, 38; Anonymous, *al-
Majālis*, fols. 277ʳ–279ᵛ.
831   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 144, 165, 324, 358, 431; Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fol. 277ʳ.
832   Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 182, speaks of numerous cavalrymen
training on the *maydān* during an ordinary weekday. See also Pagani, Relation, in Schefer
(ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 190.
833   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 331, 368, 481.
834   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 368.
835   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 481.
836   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 160; v, 94. Al-Ghawrī built two mosques in this locality, cf. Behrens-
Abouseif, *Cairo* 303–4.
837   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145, 249, 287, 342.
838   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 141, 166.

marking the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān, during which the sultan inspected the food rations to be distributed among his dependents.[839] In his descriptions of such events Ibn Iyās repeatedly notes the presence of large crowds.[840]

(d) These other uses notwithstanding, Ibn Iyās' chronicle conveys the impression that the *maydān* fulfilled mostly ceremonial and ritual functions during various types of courtly occasions.[841] Probably the most common, but generally also the least lavish of these events were the regular meetings between the sultan, the caliph, and the four chief judges at the beginning of every year and month. These took place often, though not always in the *maydān*.[842] Moreover, the sultan used to hold most of his ceremonial processions (sg. *mawkib*) from 914/1508–9 onward in the *maydān*. Ibn Iyās does not provide us with detailed accounts of what went on during these events, possibly because he was critical of the way al-Ghawrī changed time-honored courtly practices, as the dismissive tone of his reference to the new venue of the sultan's *mawkib*s suggests.[843]

In addition to the regular meetings at the beginning of every year and month and the ceremonial processions, the *maydān* also served as the stage for other courtly happenings, such as ceremonial receptions, feasts, or banquets. Since the often very similar structure of these events does not lend itself easily to subcategorization, here we differentiate between events that included (1) primarily local participants and/or (2) were attended by high-profile foreign envoys and dignitaries. While events of type (1) were, first, of communicative significance in the Mamluk domains, those of category (2) often prominently addressed foreign audiences and their representatives.

(1) Ibn Iyās provides the following account of a courtly event of the first category:

> Among the pleasant events was that on Thursday, on the eve of Friday the 15th [of Muḥarram 915/15 May 1509], the sultan descended to the *maydān*, where a large round tent had been set up and the lake that he had

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839   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 197, 244, 284, 397, 474.

840   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 141, 145, 166.

841   On the comparable roles of Byzantine hippodromes, see Cameron, Construction 117; El Cheikh, Institutionalisation 365; and on Ottoman hippodromes, see Yelçe, Evaluating 89–91.

842   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 176 (new year), 318, 338, 355, 379, 390, 470; v, 6 (new year), 31; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 147.

843   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 149. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 102–3.

built there was filled with Nile water from the aqueduct that he had built. Then, he gave orders to collect every rose in Cairo and had them thrown into this lake. [Moreover,] he brought together the Quran reciters of the city and all the preachers (*wuʿʿāẓ*). He had lamps with candles hung up and splendid mats spread out around the lake. He invited the four chief judges, all *amīr*s high and low, the officeholders from among the stewards, and all the notables. The sultan spent this night in the *maydān* and the commander-in-chief Qurqmas and all the *amīr*s spent the night with him.

He hosted on this night a splendid banquet that was greater than the banquet of the *mawlid* [of the Prophet]. During this banquet, four hundred China bowls were dished up. He gave orders to make Aleppo-style Maʾmūniyya[844] with every piece weighing half a *raṭl*.[845] The [supply of] geese, chickens, and sheep was [almost] limitless. There were 1,500 *raṭl* of meat, 1,000 chickens, 500 geese, 500 stall-fed sheep, and 40 young lambs (*rumsān*),[846] so that it was said that the cost of this banquet was more than 1,000 *dīnār*s, including the sweets, fruits, sugar, and other things, and it was a memorable night.[847]

We learn from this account that, first, the sultan and those around him did not simply rely on the fixed infrastructure of the *maydān* for their event, but engaged in a conscious manipulation of the space by setting up a tent, arranging for the lake of the *maydān* to be freshly filled with water and fragrant flowers, illuminating the area with lamps, and providing mats for seating. Thus, they changed the visual, haptic, and olfactory nature of the *maydān* to suit the attendees' ceremonial needs, as is typical for spaces housing courtly events.[848]

Second, the circle of invitees was particularly large for a courtly occasion. It encompassed also, in addition to key members of the sultan's court society, such as the highest-ranking *amīr*s and the chief judges, people who had fewer chances to attend courtly occasions, including groups such as the Quran

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844 A dish "[m]ade of boiled chicken, pounded rice cooked in milk, syrup, and sheep's tail fat [...] usually scented with musk and sometimes also with rose-water and camphor," Lewicka, *Food* 147. See also Lewicka, *Food* 204, 227, 347.

845 A Mamluk *raṭl* equaled about 450 grams, cf. Lewicka, *Food* 97, 288.

846 I thank Paulina Lewicka (Warsaw) for her help in translating this term. See also Dozy, *Supplément* i, 558.

847 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 151.

848 Cf. section 1.2.3 above.

reciters and preachers of Cairo, low-ranking military officers, and unspecified civilian officials and notables. While apparently, on this occasion, only members of the military spent the entire night with the sultan, the celebration in question—which does not seem to have had a special calendrical reason—also allowed people from the fringe of al-Ghawrī's court society to participate in a courtly event.

Third, the sultan invested considerable economic capital to make his celebration what Ibn Iyās called "a memorable night." This is obvious not only from the redecoration efforts referred to earlier, but also from the large amounts of apparently, at least in part, sophisticated foodstuffs and expensive tableware used for the banquet.

These three observations regarding the conscious use and manipulation of the space of the *maydān*, the large circles of participants, and the sizable investments in refined foodstuffs and other consumer goods also seem to have applied mutatis mutandis to most other courtly events organized in the *maydān* for primarily local attendees. After some time, the fact that the sultan would hold a lavish banquet when he visited the *maydān* was almost taken for granted, given that Ibn Iyās once noted explicitly that al-Ghawrī "did not have the banquet [there] as was customary. He suffered from a physical indisposition and retreated to the rooms of the harem."[849] Moreover, Ibn Iyās explicitly noted when an event in the *maydān* was intended only for the ruler's intimates (*akhiṣṣāʾuhu*).[850]

(2) Celebrations and receptions organized for foreign dignitaries and visitors in the *maydān* included the following event organized for the Meccan ruler Sharīf Barakāt:[851]

> On Saturday, the 20th [of Rabīʿ I 921/14 May 1515], the sultan descended to the *maydān* and spent the night [from Saturday] to Sunday there. He entered the garden (*bustān*) that he had constructed there, let water flow into the lake and had roses and jasmines sprinkled on it. [Furthermore,] he had splendid mats spread out around the lake. In the trees, he had lamps with candles, many hanging chandeliers [...] and other things hung up so that the garden was brightly illuminated. Then, he sent for Sharīf Barakāt and spent this night with him. He served him a lavish

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849 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 281.
850 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 373.
851 For another, particularly vivid description of a diplomatic reception in the *maydān*, see Baumgarten, Travels 330–2; and on Mamluk diplomatic receptions in general, see Frenkel, Embassies; Stowasser, Manners 15–6.

banquet and splendid snacks including sweets, fruits, and other things. Then he brought to him the singers of the city and the players of instruments that belonged to his retinue. It was a festive night befitting rulers (*mulūkiyya*).[852]

Many of the elements analyzed above reappear in this passage, such as the preparation of the *maydān* with flowers, mats, lamps, and other equipment; the serving of a rich banquet; and the presence of people who did not belong to the innermost circles of the sultan's court society, such as, in this case, musicians.

The attendance of these professional entertainers points to one of the few discernible differences between courtly events that targeted local audiences and those staged for people representing transregional communication partners. In the latter case, the sultan and his court apparently took special efforts to organize entertainment, which, in addition to musical performances, included lance[853] and archery demonstrations,[854] animal shows with elephants and lions,[855] polo matches,[856] and fireworks.[857] Apparently, the sultan and those around him did everything they could to ensure that transregional visitors had a favorable impression of the Mamluk court.

This last observation leads us to three questions: What did the sultan seek to communicate by building the *maydān* and using it for courtly occasions, what audiences did he target, and what significance did the *maydān* itself have as a courtly space? Beginning with the last question, it is noteworthy that in several ways, the *maydān* was unique among the localities used for courtly events in greater Cairo during al-Ghawrī's reign. Its sheer size allowed for activities that many other places simply could not accommodate, such as military demonstrations or elephant shows. The location of the *maydān* in the physical and symbolic landscape of Cairo was even more important. Located just outside, but still within easy reach of the citadel, on the one hand the *maydān* was

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852   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 449.

853   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145, 158, 160, 163–4, 230, 391, 446. See also Mauder, Head.

854   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145, 164, 448.

855   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 284 (elephants), 448. According to Pagani, Relation, in Schefer (ed. and trans.), *Voyage* 194, 197, an elephant, a giraffe, and a crocodile were on display. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 329, suggests that a hippopotamus lived in the *maydān* area. On menageries in Egypt, see Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 72–4; and on their European counterparts, see Pastoureau, Ménageries.

856   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157, 220, 229, 268–9.

857   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145, 160, 164, 448.

closely connected to the main courtly space that constituted the spatial heart of the Mamluk Sultanate.[858] Moreover, the *maydān* was clearly also a courtly space in its own right: it was constructed by a ruler who used it for his recreation, controlled access to it and, most importantly, regularly staged courtly events there. On the other hand, the *maydān* was not situated on the towering mountain spur of the citadel, but below it, where the civilian inhabitants of Cairo could easily approach it. Hence, in a very literal sense the *maydān* constituted a liminal space between the courtly world of the citadel and the vibrant city of Cairo. As such, the *maydān* functioned as a zone of contact between the population of the city and the inner circles of al-Ghawrī's court society. By staging events in the *maydān* that were open to all inhabitants of the capital, or at least certain groups among them who usually lacked access to him, the sultan temporarily integrated these people into his court society *qua* their participation in courtly events. This is not only confirmed by Ibn Iyās' remarks about the many notables, musicians, low-ranking members of the military, and even commoners who attended courtly events in the *maydān*, but also by the fact that the chronicler, who did not have regular access to the Mamluk court,[859] was able to describe events at the sultan's park-*cum*-hippodrome with a remarkable degree of detail that often far exceeds descriptions of comparable events at the citadel.

Nevertheless, the *maydān* was a not an open field, but a clearly delineated space surrounded by walls and gates that regulated access. As such, it was visibly set apart as an intermediary space, separate from but directly connected to both the courtly world of the citadel and the urban sphere of the metropolis of Cairo. This singular character as a liminal courtly space enabled the *maydān* to play a key role in the sultan's efforts to reach out to his subjects at large on his own terms and under controlled conditions. Moreover, it also allowed members of the population of Cairo who did not belong—in the narrower sense—to the sultan's court to approach the ruler with their concerns and requests, as the holding of general audiences demonstrates.

What messages did the sultan communicate to the local audiences gathered in the *maydān*, be they members of his court society or of the Mamluk population at large? Above, we differentiated between military, legal, religious, and ceremonial as well as ritual functions of the *maydān*. The same approach now helps us better grasp the communicative significance of the *maydān* and the events taking place there.

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858   See section 4.1.1 above.
859   Cf. section 2.1.1 above.

The *maydān* clearly fulfilled a key role in displaying Mamluk military prowess, be it through polo matches or demonstrations of lance and archery skills. It served as the primary stage on which members of the Mamluk military, headed by the sultan, demonstrated to themselves and the civilian population that they were able to defend the realm against military threats.

The sultan's personal involvement in these military displays should not be underestimated, given that Ibn Iyās repeatedly noted the sultan's active participation in polo matches. For a man of al-Ghawrī's age, playing polo was a good way of proving to his court society—including several potential rivals—that he was still physically able to fulfill his military duties. The following passage from Ibn Iyās underlines the significance that the sultan and his contemporaries attributed to the ruler's active participation in these matches:

> On Saturday, the 18th [of Rabīʿ I 920/23 May 1514], the sultan began to play polo in the *maydān*, and the *amīr*s went out to him as [was] customary. However, the sultan was physically unwell and only played a very little polo, [he did this] so that it [could] be said that the sultan had played polo this year.[860]

This passage speaks volumes about the communicative significance of the sultan's engagement in polo. Even when he was indisposed, al-Ghawrī took pains to go to the polo field, mount a horse, and play for some time—thereby also taking the risks entailed by this dangerous sport[861]—just to make sure that the people knew that he had played during the opening of the season, as was customary.[862]

The construction of the *maydān* as a military structure carried further communicative significance because al-Ghawrī was not the first sultan to establish a hippodrome below the citadel, as discussed above. By building his *maydān* in the same location, the sultan established a link between himself and revered rulers of old, such as Ibn Ṭūlūn and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn. The literary offering *al-Majālis al-marḍiyya* highlights this connection when it integrates a preview of al-Ghawrī's renovation of the *maydān* into its lengthy biography of Ibn Ṭūlūn and links the *maydān* to the sultan's concern for the skills of his cavalrymen.[863] Thus, through his construction activity, the sultan could

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860   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 372.
861   Al-Ghawrī had at least one polo accident as sultan, cf. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 175.
862   See also Mauder, Head.
863   Anonymous, *al-Majālis*, fols. 192ᵛ–194ʳ, 272ᵛ–276ᵛ.

claim to have revived an ancient tradition of soldier-sultans who had built military training facilities in Cairo, and with whom he stood now on the same level. At the same time, he could highlight his role in revitalizing the ancient *furūsiyya* tradition of mounted warfare.[864]

Al-Ghawrī's use of the *maydān* as a place of legal litigation allowed him to appear in front of large audiences as an approachable ruler who dispensed justice among his subjects. The sultan's construction of special structures to hear trials underscores the importance of this aspect of the communicative impact of the *maydān*. Ibn Iyās' references to the many attendees at such sessions likewise indicates that they were an important part of improving the sultan's image among his subjects.

Similarly, events with a religious character took place in the contact zone below the citadel; these events included the review of Ramaḍān gifts and the distribution of alms. Events of this type helped the sultan project an image of himself as a pious ruler to his court society and to the population at large. Moreover, the parading of the *kiswa* and the *maḥmal* before the ruler reaffirmed his position as overlord of the Hijaz.

The *maydān* was of central importance for the messages that al-Ghawrī and those around him sought to confer through ceremonial and ritual activities. Many of these, including banquets and the presence of animals and flowers brought there at considerable cost can best be explained as acts of conspicuous consumption intended to display to onlookers and participants the wealth that the sultan had at his command. Moreover, the sultan's role as the host of these events provided him with an opportunity to demonstrate his generosity and largesse to large segments of the Mamluk population. Here, sizable amounts of food were particularly important, with "excessive quantities of food being indicators of social status"[865] in Mamluk culture. Participation in these banquets also served as a marker of status for both the narrower circles of the courtly elite and other participants who were invited less regularly.

The sultan's enjoyment of the artificial garden landscape of the *maydān* with its purpose-built architecture, rich flora, and numerous birds singled him out as a ruler who was not only the commander of a strong army, a pious Muslim, and a generous and wealthy host, but also, according to the standards of his time, a cultivated and refined person.

Finally, the fact that the flora and fauna of the *maydān* went far beyond local Egyptian species and also included plants and animals from other parts of the

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864   Cf. Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 57. See also section 2.2.1 above.
865   Lewicka, *Food* 44.

Mamluk realm as well as more remote regions of the world can be interpreted as a symbolic statement about al-Ghawrī's status as ruler. By demonstrating his control over the nature of regions across the known world, the sultan also claimed suzerainty, albeit symbolically, over these territories. According to this interpretation, the presence of foreign plants and animals in al-Ghawrī's *maydān* could be seen as a symbolic claim to universal rule.[866] At the very least, it was a demonstration that the Mamluks were well connected to transregional commercial networks and had the necessary resources to import luxury goods from all around the world.

So far, we have focused on the communicative significance of activities in the *maydān* for domestic audiences. With the possible exception of the impact of the hearing of legal cases, most of our findings also apply to transregional communication involving non-Mamluk interlocutors. This conclusion is based primarily on the evidence that the sultan and his court made sure that foreign dignitaries and envoys had ample opportunity to observe and participate in the courtly events staged in the *maydān*—apart from legal trials, which official foreign visitors did not seem to have attended.

This point is especially applicable to events that were well-suited to display Mamluk military prowess to transregional audiences. We know of numerous instances in which diplomats and members of foreign dynasties attended Mamluk military demonstrations and related events, such as polo games.[867] By showcasing their military capabilities, the Mamluks differentiated little between potential or real enemies, such as representatives of the Safawids with whom the Mamluks engaged in several border skirmishes during al-Ghawrī's reign,[868] and clients and allies, such as the Ottomans who for much of al-Ghawrī's tenure supported Mamluk military operations in the Red Sea region,[869] or the Sharīfī rulers of Mecca who recognized Mamluk suzerainty.[870] Although the events staged for these audiences were very similar in structure, arguably, they were intended to convey different messages. In the Safawids' case, displays of military might could serve to intimidate a hostile foreign ruling elite and dissuade them from further attacks on Mamluk territory. In the case of clients and allies, al-Ghawrī and those around him sought to signal to

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866   For similar arguments regarding Ottoman gardens, see Atasoy, *Garden* 53; and for exotic animals in Mamluk-Ottoman gift exchanges, see Muslu, *Ottomans* 40.

867   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145, 157, 160, 163–4, 220, 229–30, 268–9, 391, 446, 448. See also Ayalon, *Gunpowder* 57–8.

868   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 220, 229–230. See also Clifford, Observations 258.

869   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 157, 160, 163–4. See also Muslu, *Ottomans* 58.

870   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 446, 448.

their transregional partners that the Mamluk Sultanate was able to live up to its promises of military support and protection.

Ibn Iyās' work suggests that the Mamluks' accomplished their communicative goals, at least in part. With regard to a Safawid envoy who observed Mamluk lance fighters training in the *maydān*, the chronicler noted that "he was extremely astonished by that."[871] Similarly, Ibn Iyās stated regarding an Ottoman emissary observing another display of lance training that "the envoy was perplexed by it and was extremely astonished."[872]

Among the religious messages the sultan conveyed to transregional audiences through events staged in his *maydān*, communicative reaffirmations of Mamluk suzerainty over the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina seem to have been of central importance. To this end, reviews of the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa*, the two most significant emblems of Mamluk suzerainty over the Hijaz, were organized in front of representatives of other polities. The following account of the review in 914/1508 is a case in point:

> On Thursday, the 4th [of Shaʿbān 914/28 November 1508], the sultan went down to the *maydān* and sat in the loggia that was there. The *amīr*s gathered around him, then came the envoy of the ruler of Baghdad. On this day, the lancers paraded in the *maydān* in front of the sultan, the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa* of the Kaʿba were brought in, and [the lancers] circled around it in the *maydān*. A large crowd of people gathered there because of the spectacle (*furja*), especially [since] this took place in the presence of the envoy of the ruler of Baghdad.[873]

In the case of visitors such as the envoy from Baghdad, for whom a trip to the Hijaz would have constituted a prohibitively long detour of their mission, the presentation of the *maḥmal* and the *kiswa* in the *maydān* were an important communicative strategy of enacting Mamluk suzerainty over the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina. Moreover, thanks to the spatial possibilities that the *maydān* offered, such presentations could easily be integrated into the program of those making even short diplomatic sojourns in Cairo.

Furthermore, the primarily ceremonial and ritual events in the *maydān* that conveyed notions of Mamluk wealth, largesse, refinement, and all-embracing rule also targeted transregional audiences, as is apparent from the fact that for-

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871   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 230. See also, e.g., Brummett, *Seapower* 70–1, 78; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 71.

872   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 391. See also, e.g., Petry, *Twilight* 207; Muslu, *Ottomans* 165.

873   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 145.

eign emissaries and notables were often guests of honor at these events, as several examples given above already showed. In the case of such representatives of non-domestic audiences, another feature of these ceremonial courtly events and the ways they were staged in the courtly space of the *maydān* stands out: Through these events, the Mamluk elite demonstrated that they were well versed in transregional courtly aesthetics and cultural norms.

As mentioned above, the very design of al-Ghawrī's *maydān* was highly unusual in the late Mamluk context and went far beyond the necessary elements of a military training facility. A search for similar structures in the Islamicate world of the late middle and early modern periods leads beyond the Mamluk territories to the Persianate and Ottoman realms to the East and North. There, pleasure gardens that were often likened to paradise[874]—as Ibn Iyās and *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* did with al-Ghawrī's *maydān*—played a central role in the representation and legitimation of rule. Nerina Rustomji notes regarding the Persianate world: "[G]ardens are often seen as the result of divine favor or evidence of the splendor of a ruler. If a ruler can create a garden that mirrors *al-janna*, then his or her realm has as much majesty as possible for God's agent on earth: the best rulers build the best gardens."[875]

This understanding of the representative importance of garden architecture was widely shared among many Islamicate rulers and court societies, including those of the Ghaznawids,[876] Muzaffarids,[877] Timurids,[878] Safawids,[879] and Mughals.[880] Typically, the Persianate pleasure gardens of these dynasties included palaces and pavilions and were used as stages for courtly receptions, feasts, and banquets, with tents erected at times especially for such occasions.[881] These gardens were often walled, sported artificial waterways and

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874   On this common motif, see, e.g., Rustomji, *Garden* 150–6; Brookshaw, Palaces 202; Atasoy, *Garden* 211, 215–6; Lange, *Paradise* 260; Behrens-Abouseif, Gardens 311; Hasson, *Amusements* 87, 89; Subtelny, *Jardin* 106–8.

875   Rustomji, *Garden* 150. See also Brookshaw, Palaces 202; Subtelny, *Jardin* 103–6.

876   Rustomji, *Garden* 150. See also Brookshaw, Palaces 203.

877   Brookshaw, Palaces 204.

878   Gronke, Courts 369–70. See also Wilber, Court, esp. 128; Brookshaw, Palaces 203; Ruggles, Gardens 277; Balabanlilar, Lords 28–9; Brookes, *Gardens* 72–7; Moynihan, *Paradise* 50–2, 71–8; Pinder-Wilson, Garden 77–8, 80–1; Subtelny, *Jardin* 110–7.

879   Kleiss, Palaces 269. See also Keshani, Theatres 447–8; Ruggles, Gardens 277; Brookes, *Gardens* 77–89; Moynihan, *Paradise* 53–67; Pinder-Wilson, Garden 79–80, 84–5.

880   Rustomji, *Garden* 156. See also Ruggles, Gardens 277; Balabanlilar, Lords 29–31; Brookes, *Gardens* 116–61; Moynihan, *Paradise* 79–86, 96–147; Jellicoe, Development; Pinder-Wilson, Garden 81–2; Subtelny, *Jardin* 117–21.

881   Gronke, Courts 369 (focusing on Timurid examples). See also Brookshaw, Palaces 202–3, 206; Hasson, *Amusements* 89; Subtelny, *Jardin* 104; Pinder-Wilson, Garden.

lakes, and were planted with various fruit trees.[882] The rulers responsible for their construction often held court in them while seated on a raised throne or platform in the shade, with attendants resting on rugs spread on the ground.[883]

Ottoman gardens, while incorporating many of the typical elements of Persianate gardens, were distinctly different in their design. They often followed Byzantine models which, among other aspects, favored smaller, secluded, and generally inaccessible gardens without artificial bodies of water, all in contrast to the more park-like structures of the Persianate world.[884] According to Nurhan Atasoy, "Ottoman gardens were not intended to be the settings for splendid ceremonies but rather havens of privacy where the sultan and his intimates could spend a few hours or several days far from other eyes."[885] Another, particularly well-documented element of Ottoman landscape architecture was the practice of importing trees and flowers from faraway regions to plant them in the gardens of Istanbul.[886]

Al-Ghawrī's *maydān* clearly formed part of this transregional Islamicate culture of court gardening that, according to Rustomji, served to demonstrate a ruler's splendor, glory, and refinement. By having a pleasure garden of his own that quite closely followed Persianate standards of landscape architecture while rivaling Ottoman gardens in terms of imported plants,[887] al-Ghawrī demonstrated that his court stood on an equal cultural footing with those of his Islamicate dynastic rivals. Whereas earlier Mamluk rulers had viewed their *maydān*s primarily as military training facilities, from the very outset al-Ghawrī constructed his *maydān* with the novel purpose of signaling to transregional courtly audiences that the Mamluks were not only a military force to be reckoned with, but also lived up to widely shared expectations of sophisticated court life in the early tenth/sixteenth century. Therefore, al-Ghawrī and his court must have been particularly interested in ensuring that foreign envoys and notables had direct and positive impressions of the new Mamluk showpiece *maydān*.

There is evidence that the Mamluks' transregional interlocutors took note of this novel communicative strategy that aimed to secure a place for the Mamluk Sultanate among the culturally sophisticated polities of the day. In his account

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882   Brookshaw, Palaces 202; Atasoy, *Garden* 21 (for lakes). See also Pinder-Wilson, Garden 73.
883   Brookshaw, Palaces 203.
884   Atasoy, *Garden* 21–2, 27–8. See also Brookes, *Gardens* 184–90.
885   Atasoy, *Garden* 53.
886   Atasoy, *Garden* 14, 33.
887   I disagree with the statement in Irwin, Literature 28, regarding "al-Ghūrī's enthusiasm for gardening on a grand scale in the Ottoman Turkish manner." On the Persianate influence on Mamluk gardening, see also Behrens-Abouseif, Gardens 310.

of the year 917/1511–2, Ibn Iyās mentions that the Safawid ruler Shāh Ismāʿīl sent al-Ghawrī the following lines of poetry together with the severed head of one of his Sunni enemies, the Özbek Khān Muḥammad Shaybānī:

> The sword and the dagger are our aromatic herbs.
>   Shame on narcissus and myrtle!
> Our wine is the blood of our enemies,
>   And our cup[s] are the skull[s] of [their] head[s]![888]

Ibn Iyās explains the second part of this poem as follows: "After [Shāh Ismāʿīl] cut off the head of the Özbek Khān, the ruler of the Tatars, he made a cup from the skull of his head [and] drank wine from it during impromptu sessions (*maqāmāt*), according to what is said about him."[889] Regarding the first part of the poem, he writes: "It was made known in the lands of the Safawid[s] that the sultan occupied himself with organizing the planting of trees and seedlings of flowers and aromatic herbs in the *maydān*, and [the Safawids] wanted to poke fun at him for that."[890]

This noteworthy diplomatic message indicates at least two things: First, the Safawid court was well aware of al-Ghawrī's gardening project.[891] Second, the sultan's horticultural interests were seen as so relevant—and possibly as so atypical of a Mamluk ruler—that they constituted appealing subjects of satire. Although the lines given above were intended as a provocation, they show that al-Ghawrī and those around him were, at least in part, successful in making the construction of the *maydān* known across the Islamicate world of their time.

Taken together, the construction of the *maydān* as a liminal space connecting the Cairo Citadel to the wider realm of the Mamluk Sultanate was an important element in al-Ghawrī's communicative strategies of representing and legitimating his rule vis-à-vis domestic audiences and foreign court societies. Thus, it is misleading to categorize the construction of the *maydān* as a "pet project,"[892] in which he "squander[ed]"[893] money, or as a "hobby"[894] that

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888   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 221.

889   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 221.

890   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 222. See also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 49–50; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* i, 297; Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 82–3; Petry, *Twilight* 176–8; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 26; Mauder, Head.

891   See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 14.

892   Petry, *Twilight* 169.

893   Petry, *Twilight* 169.

894   Mostafa, Beiträge 207 ("Liebhaberbei").

bore witness to its commissioner's "extravagance"[895] as has been done in earlier scholarship. Rather, we should understand the building of the *maydān*—which was among al-Ghawrī's first major architectural projects, preceding even the completion of his funeral complex[896]—as part of a conscious and, in Mamluk terms, innovative strategy. Its aim was to provide the sultan and his court society with a courtly space that fulfilled their military, juridical, religious, and ceremonial needs and at the same time underscored the Mamluks' thorough integration into the transregional networks of Islamicate political communication, in which garden architecture was a central part of the vocabulary of rulership.

The case study of al-Ghawrī's *maydān* clearly shows that architecture and the reshaping and reconfiguration of space constituted a communicative instrument in representing and legitimating late Mamluk rule.[897] Thus, there was undoubtedly an expressive intent in courtly architecture under al-Ghawrī. Yet, this intent was decidedly more nuanced and multifaceted than originally assumed in Humphreys' groundbreaking early study of Mamluk architecture.

Moreover, the case of al-Ghawrī's *maydān* reveals that at least in the early tenth/sixteenth century, the Mamluk ruling elite was remarkably willing and able to accept and incorporate novel architectural forms and cultural practices. As in the case of Persianate garden architecture, in earlier Mamluk political culture these forms and practices were often, at best, of limited significance, but constituted key strategies in the transregional contest for legitimate political authority throughout the Islamicate world. Hence we can understand the construction of al-Ghawrī's *maydān* in part as an attempt to deal with the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy that haunted al-Ghawrī's reign. This attempt was based on the incorporation and creative adaption of cultural forms current in other, especially Persianate, regions of the Islamicate world.

Although al-Ghawrī's construction activities were spread out all across the Mamluk realm, the fundamental problem remained that only a limited number of people could see the sultan's structures and thus directly receive the message that the sultan aimed to communicate through them. Other subjects, such as large segments of the rural population, were mostly excluded from this form of communication.

There is evidence that the Mamluk ruling elite employed the minting of novel types of copper coins as an alternative and innovative strategy to establish communication relations also and especially with those parts of the pop-

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895   Petry, *Protectors* 164.

896   Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 14.

897   See Luz, Icons 242, 262–3 for similar conclusions regarding Mamluk Jerusalem.
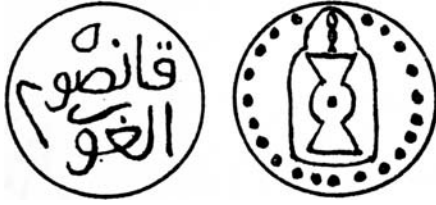
FIGURE 6.1
Fals minted under Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.
Balog type 901. Balog, *Coinage* 381.

ulation who lacked direct access to the structures the sultan built in Cairo and other urban centers. Unlike silver and gold coins, which, as discussed above, had very conservative designs during al-Ghawrī's reign, copper coins (sg. *fals*) constituted a type of material object that circulated widely even among the less affluent members of Mamluk society.[898] According to Paul Balog, they were produced "in great quantities"[899] during this sultan's reign; their low intrinsic value made these coins perfect large-scale communicative media, their basic economic function notwithstanding.[900]

Late Mamluk copper coins stand out from their numismatic context because of their unusually large size and their elaborate design that at times included stylized representations of animals and man-made structures. This last feature is especially noteworthy, given that premodern Islamicate coins are typically not known for their elaborate visual decorations.[901]

In al-Ghawrī's copper coinage, three visual motives occur particularly often. The first of these is illustrated by the copper coin type Balog 901 and its variants. While one side of the coins of this type simply bears the sultan's name Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī, the second side shows what Balog describes as "a linear *miḥrāb*, in which is suspended a mosque lamp"[902] (see fig. 6.1).

The second type of coin of interest here is Balog type 899, which features al-Ghawrī's *nisba* on one side, written in what Balog called a "[m]edallion in the shape of a mosque-lamp."[903] The other side carries the sultan's personal name (*ism*) together with the formula "may his victory be glorious" (*ʿazza naṣruhu*), which was common in the Mamluk period (see fig. 6.2).

Coin forms related to Balog type 899 share the medallion feature in the form of a mosque lamp with the sultan's relational surname (*nisba*) written in the

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898 Cf. section 3.5 above. On the wide circulation of copper coins, see also Schultz, Mechanisms 344–5.

899 Balog, Hoard 244. See also Schultz, History 187. On the easy availability of copper, see Meloy, Money 298.

900 On coins as media targeting large audiences, see also Marsham, Caliph 25.

901 Bacharach and Anwar, Coinage 15–6.

902 Balog, *Coinage* 381. See also Balog, Hoard 257–8.

903 Balog, *Coinage* 380.
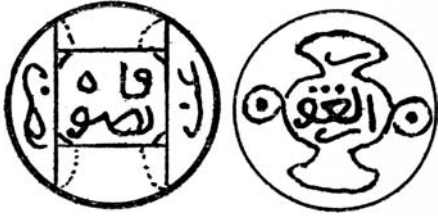
FIGURE 6.2
Fals minted under Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.
Balog type 899. Balog, *Coinage* 380.

FIGURE 6.3
Fals minted under Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.
Variant of Balog type 899, cataloged as coin
23 in Balog, Hoard 257.
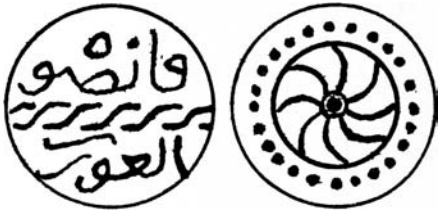
FIGURE 6.4
Fals minted under Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī.
Balog type 903. Balog, *Coinage* 382.

middle. The other side is decorated with a checkerboard pattern around an
open center bearing the sultan's *ism*. Balog suggested that one could interpret
this blank space in the center as another rendition of a *miḥrāb* (see fig. 6.3).[904]

The third and final type of copper coins relevant here is Balog type 903 and
its two variants, all of which bear on one side al-Ghawrī's *ism* and *nisba* and on
the other side what is commonly interpreted as a rendition of a water wheel
(*sāqiya*) (see fig. 6.4).[905]

Taken together, we see that architectural motifs feature prominently on a
considerable number of copper coin types minted under al-Ghawrī. Accord-
ing to Balog's catalogue of Mamluk coinage, only one known coin type from
al-Ghawrī's reign bears an image of an object that cannot be clearly identified
as a building or part of a building.[906]

It is unlikely that this predominance of architectural motifs in the images on
copper coins from al-Ghawrī's reign is just a coincidence. After all, al-Ghawrī

904   Balog, Hoard 257.
905   Balog, *Coinage* 382; Balog, Hoard 259–60.
906   Balog type 902 (chalice).

sponsored large-scale architectural projects throughout the sultanate, made major investments in water infrastructure such as water wheels, and constructed and renovated numerous mosques. Given that in the Islamicate middle period, a coin's "style, script or inscription represents the official position of the issuing authority,"[907] al-Ghawrī arguably employed copper coinage as a communicative medium to convey messages about these architectural projects to large segments of the Mamluk population. Although currently it is not possible to identify coin images with specific structures built under al-Ghawrī, it stands to reason that coins bearing images of *miḥrāb*s and mosque lamps point to the sultan's building and renovation of mosques, while coins decorated with water wheels relate to the sultan's construction of the citadel aqueduct and similar structures, especially since there is no evidence that these motifs could constitute heraldic forms.[908]

This innovative visual program of his copper coins[909] enabled al-Ghawrī to use widely circulating material objects as media to convey his image as a generous and pious ruler to audiences who otherwise might never have learned about the sultan's sponsorship of architecture.[910] For those audiences who were familiar with the sultan's building projects, the images on the coins were a constant reminder of their ruler's piety and grandeur.

Our analysis of al-Ghawrī's sponsorship of architectural projects and the minting of copper coins during his reign demonstrates that material objects were of key importance for the sultan's communicative efforts to represent and legitimate his rule.[911] They not only fulfilled military, economic, and other functions, but in themselves carried meaning. Moreover, we saw that material objects were particularly well-suited to address multiple audiences at once. This applies especially to subjects beyond the inner circles of the sultan's court society, those who might never have had a chance to participate in courtly events at the citadel. Many of them, however, could attend events in the liminal space of the *maydān*, behold the structures that the sultan built throughout

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907   Bacharach and Anwar, Coinage 16. See also Schultz, Coins 245.

908   Cf. Allan, Heraldry; Mayer, *Heraldry*; Meineke, Heraldik. On lamps from al-Ghawrī's funeral complex, see Wiet, *Lampes* 118–9; Wiet, *Cuivre* 28–9, 37–40.

909   On coins as means of communication, see Bates, Numismatics 2, 4. Water wheels, mosque lamps, and *miḥrāb*s also appear on earlier Mamluk copper coins, cf. Balog, Hoard 249–50, 253–4, 262; Balog, *Coinage* 365–6; Balog, Additions 134, 141, 168. However, representations of architectural structures do not dominate the coinage of any earlier Mamluk ruler to a comparable degree.

910   This argument is based on Bacharach and Anwar, Coinage 15–6.

911   See also Barker, *Legitimating* 53–4, 58; and for the case of an earlier Mamluk sultan, see Flinterman and van Steenbergen, Formation, esp. 88–9, 82, 100–1, 108.

the realm, or at least use the sultan's copper coins with their visual representations of his architectural projects. Hence, the conscious use of material objects facilitated the impact of al-Ghawrī's legitimation strategies; given the technological conditions of the time, few other forms of communication could compare. Finally, this use of material objects allows modern-day researchers insights into communicative practices beyond the focus of the available textual sources and this helps us understand how al-Ghawrī sought to present himself to his contemporaries as a legitimate ruler.

6.3.3   *Parades, Feasts, and Other Celebrations*

Even a cursory reading of Ibn Iyās' account of al-Ghawrī's reign reveals that parades, feasts, receptions, recreational outings, banquets, and other celebrations were an oft-recurring feature of this time, especially, but not only during the comparatively uneventful middle years of his tenure. Historians have long noticed this fact, but their attempts at an explanation often closely followed the interpretation offered by Ibn Iyās' chronicle which pointed to the sultan's character traits and moral shortcomings as the main reason for the staging of such events. Mohamed Mostafa's evaluation of al-Ghawrī's activities is a typical example of this understanding:[912] "[The sultan] incurred extraordinarily large expenditures to satisfy his love for pomp. One can really speak here about immense waste. [...] He arranged outings and feasts in outright overweening excess, in the staging of which [...] splendor and preposterous luxury were employed."[913] A more recent study of al-Ghawrī's biography likewise sees the sultan's "love of luxury"[914] and his "love of grand living"[915] as among the most salient features of his reign. Moreover, it depicts the sultan as "obsessed with personal luxury"[916] and occupied with "needless fuss"[917] in organizing "frivolous outings."[918]

The present study does not seek to reflect on al-Ghawrī's personal character or pronounce a judgment on his moral qualities—an endeavor that appears next to impossible given the available information. Instead, a novel reading of al-Ghawrī's organization of parades, feasts, and other celebrations is suggested here in order to understand them as court events with a communic-

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912   See section 2.2.1 above for further examples.
913   Mostafa, Beiträge 208.
914   Petry, *Twilight* 5.
915   Petry, *Twilight* 188.
916   Petry, *Twilight* 124.
917   Petry, *Twilight* 188.
918   Petry, *Twilight* 188. Also note, however, Petry, Robing 363: "Whatever Al-Ghawrī's personal inclinations toward luxury, he was alert to the symbolic value of royal pomp."

ative character rather than as results of the sultan's character flaws. Since we have studied events that were primarily of transregional communicative significance in earlier sections[919] and recent scholarship offers several in-depth analyses of Mamluk diplomatic culture,[920] here we focus on events primarily targeting domestic audiences.

Any attempt to cover all of the many pertinent events described in Ibn Iyās and other sources would be doomed to failure. Rather, here we focus on a series of court events that took place in the month of Shaʿbān of 919/October–November 1513 in celebration of the sultan's recovery from an eye infection. This series of events constitutes a particularly promising object of study for several reasons. First, it took place in celebration of an important development in the sultan's life and was covered by Ibn Iyās in sufficient detail to allow for a comprehensive, communication-centered analysis.

Second, the events in question can be understood both as separate communicative occurrences in their own right and as links in a chain of occasions that only reveal their full importance as part of this chain. This allows us to approach them on two analytical levels, and in turn precludes an atomistic interpretation of a given event that neglects its context.

Third, the individual elements of the chain of events in question were quite typical for late Mamluk court life and offer a largely representative sample for our analysis.

Above, we have seen that the year 919/1513–4 was particularly difficult for al-Ghawrī; it brought an outbreak of the plague, adverse weather conditions, and continued security threats in the form of Portuguese naval operations on the southeastern flank of the sultanate. Moreover, from mid-Rabīʿ I 919/late May 1513 onward, the sultan suffered from an eye infection that forced him to suspend many of his regular activities and retreat to his personal quarters in the citadel. Despite the sultan's attempts to secure divine benevolence through pious acts, the infection lasted months.[921] During this time, several key events of Mamluk court life did not take place, including the sultan's distribution of payments to the army,[922] the sultan's Friday prayer together with his court society,[923] the celebration of the *mawlid*s of revered men of religion,[924] tra-

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919   See esp. sections 4.1.2.3 and 6.3.2 above.

920   See, e.g., the pertinent studies by Bauden, Behrens-Abouseif, Broadbridge, Dekkiche, Frenkel, and Muslu in the bibliography.

921   Cf. section 2.1.2.3 above.

922   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 307, 312.

923   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 307, 316, 325, 330.

924   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 309.

ditional polo games,[925] the sultan's dispensing of justice among the subject population,[926] the holding of military parades,[927] and the sultan's customary outings.[928]

Al-Ghawrī's eye disease also posed a significant threat to his rule. Throughout the long months of the infection, rumors repeatedly surfaced that al-Ghawrī had become blind—and thus, by implication, unfit for rule[929]—or that he intended to step down and appoint his son in his place.[930] Moreover, a group within the military allegedly planned to depose the sultan[931] and replace him with one of his imprisoned predecessors or a high-ranking *amīr*, such as the governor of Damascus.[932] Furthermore, the high-ranking *amīr*s were apparently preparing for the internal strife that typically resulted from a sultan's removal or death, a fact that forced al-Ghawrī to have them swear their loyalty to him on a Quran copy.[933] One of them, the *amīr majlis* whom the sultan perceived as particularly dangerous, was put under house arrest,[934] while the prefect of Cairo received orders to intensify his nightly patrols in the city.[935] The tension reached such high levels that the *amīr*s avoided going to the citadel because they feared that the sultan would imprison them, while the latter distributed weapons and full battle gear to the soldiers deployed close to his personal quarters.[936]

In late Rajab 919/late September 1513, the sultan underwent a surgery on his eyelids that had long been recommended and that led to a profound and lasting improvement of his condition.[937] While shortly thereafter the sultan was able to resume his duties, the preceding months had left their mark on the internal situation of the Mamluk court. With the sultan unable to stage and attend the events that usually brought the Mamluk court into being, his court society, at least its military part, showed signs of advanced disintegration, such that the sultan and the *amīr*s prepared themselves for a collapse of social order and an imminent outbreak of physical violence.

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925   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 310.
926   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 311, 326.
927   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 325.
928   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 313. It is unclear whether the sultan held any *majālis* during this period.
929   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 311, 315, 319, 328.
930   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 311–2, 314.
931   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 315, 319.
932   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 316, 319.
933   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 313, 318.
934   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 315, 318.
935   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 313–4.
936   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 316.
937   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 330.

Although the sultan's recovery prevented the eruption of open violent conflict, al-Ghawrī's position as the undisputed ruler of the Mamluk realm had been severely compromised, given that members of the ruling elite had begun to rally around multiple alternative candidates for the sultanate, some of whom Ibn Iyās identified by name. This showed that al-Ghawrī was by no means indispensable and that several other members of the elite were seen as viable and immediately available replacements. Moreover, al-Ghawrī's physical ability to rule had been called into question. If we conceptualize legitimacy as the "subjects' *belief* in the rightfulness of the ruler or the state, more specifically in their authority to issue commands"[938] as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, then the sultan's illness had undoubtedly dealt a severe blow to his legitimacy. This is also apparent from the fact that immediately after his recovery, the soldiers whom the sultan had chosen to march to Suez to support the naval activities against the Portuguese disobeyed his command outright.[939]

How did the sultan react to this apparent threat to his position and, at least indirectly, his life? The sultan could have deposed, punished, or exiled those *amīr*s whose loyalty appeared doubtful to him. Or, he could have gotten rid of the figureheads of the imminent revolt, those who had been nominated as potential candidates for the sultanate. Alternatively, the sultan might also have attempted to make himself less dependent on the *amīr*s' support by intensifying his experiments with the establishment of army units outside the established Mamluk military system. However, the sultan did not implement any of these options during the period after his recovery; rather he turned the month of Shaʿbān 919/October–November 1513 into an extended period of feasting and celebration.

The opening event of this festive month went awry, as the sultan was absent when the caliph and the four chief judges came to meet him on the first of Shaʿbān: al-Ghawrī had thought that the new month would begin the next day and was taking a bath.[940] The following day, he resumed his duties in front of large audiences by descending to the *maydān* to dispense justice among the people and distribute fodder allocations to the army. In describing this occasion, Ibn Iyās noted that al-Ghawrī—apparently for the first time—took the bandages from his eyes, thus proving to the many civilian and military attendees at the *maydān* that he had been cured and was again able to fulfill his military and juridical functions.[941]

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938   Karateke, Legitimizing 15.

939   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 331.

940   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 331.

941   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 331.

The sultan next focused his attention on the group in his court society that had shown the clearest signs of disintegration and internal strife: the leading *amīr*s. Two days after his appearance at the *maydān*, the sultan met the highest-ranking officers at the citadel. During earlier gatherings, the ailing sultan had received members of the military in his secluded personal quarters. Now the situation had changed:

> The sultan came out to [the *amīr*s] from the Duhaysha Hall walking on his feet (*wa-huwa mashā ʿalā aqdāmihi*). He had put on the large light turban [...]. The large light turbans with long horns have become the crown (*tāj*) of the sultans of Egypt, as the crown of the Persian kings used to be. [...] The sultan had not put on the large light turban for about four months and [during this time] had not sat on the raised platform from which he passed verdicts in the *ḥawsh*.
>
> When he came out, he walked on foot and sat down on that platform. The *amīr*s then kissed the ground in front of him and congratulated him on wearing the large light turban. Then, the inkwell was brought to him. On this day, he put his personal signature (*ʿallama*) on several decrees and had several rulings executed.[942]

This meeting with the *amīr*s can be interpreted as a carefully staged enactment of the sultan's regained physical ability to rule. By again donning the special type of headgear that served as a sartorial marker of his status, but that he had been unable to wear for months, the sultan signaled to the leading military members of his court that he had reemerged from his seclusion as the uncontested ruler of the realm. As seen above, this headgear, with its two distinctive horns, was a symbolic expression of the sultan's claim to stand in the succession of Alexander the Great.[943]

Moreover, in his encounter with the *amīr*s the sultan also relied on the symbolic qualities of the citadel space. By receiving them in the courtyard of the citadel, which served as one of the most important localities for Mamluk courtly ceremonies, the sultan reaffirmed his hold on the Cairo Citadel as the spatial center of Mamluk polity. Moreover, by sitting on the *maṣṭaba* he had erected to dispense justice among his subjects, the sultan performatively reclaimed one of the most important architectural tokens of his rule. Through its physical height it also allowed him to dramatize his exalted position over the *amīr*s, who

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942   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 331–2.
943   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.

demonstrated their deference by kissing the ground before him, thus lowering themselves even more in front of the elevated ruler. The fact that the sultan walked to his *maṣṭaba* was apparently taken as further affirmation that he had in fact regained his physical and political strength; Ibn Iyās considered this element so important that he mentioned it twice in the short quoted passage.

According to the chronicler, the sultan's attempt to retake and stabilize his exalted position vis-à-vis the military elite was successful; the *amīr*s physically displayed their obedience and acknowledged that he was again able to wear the distinctive sultanic headgear that could be seen as equivalent to the crowns of European kings. Moreover, the sultan demonstrated his regained ability to rule by resuming his administrative duties in the presence of the *amīr*s. Ibn Iyās commemorated this event in the following lines of poetry:

> When the sultan recovered from the inflammation of his eyes
>   thanks to the one who had undertaken the *miʿrāj* [that is, Muḥam-
>   mad],
> All humankind regarded it as a good omen
>   that, from the day he put on the crown, he would remain in rule (*fī
>   l-mulk bāqin*).[944]

Immediately after this meeting with the highest *amīr*s, the sultan moved to the loggia (*maqʿad*) that he had built within the citadel, thus drawing attention to another aspect of his construction activities at the spatial heart of the sultanate. Both on his way to this building and after arriving there, the sultan took measures to present himself as a generous ruler. While the sultan walked to the *maqʿad*, gold and silver coins were distributed among his bodyguard. At the loggia, al-Ghawrī bestowed valuable woolen sable-lined robes of honor (sg. *kāmiliyya*)[945] on several clients and key civilian members of his court society, including his master physicians, who also received large sums of money in recognition of their services.[946] By treating his military and civilian clients so generously, the sultan not only demonstrated to all those present that he fulfilled expectations of sultanic largesse, but he also showed, quite plainly, that for members of his court, loyalty and good service to the ruler paid off.

When awarding robes of honor (sg. *khilʿa*)[947] to his chosen clients, al-Ghawrī participated in a centuries-old tradition of symbolic exchange that constituted

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944   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 332–3.
945   On this term, see Petry, Robing 354.
946   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 332.
947   On this word and related terms, see Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 21–4.

a key element of premodern Islamicate court culture. While robes of honor had been regularly used as communicative tokens in Islamicate courts since the early days of the ʿAbbasid caliphate,[948] "the history of the *khilʿa* reached its pinnacle in the Mamluk epoch,"[949] as Monika Springberg-Hinsen pointed out. Mamluk times saw the development of a refined and sophisticated system in which multiple types of robes of honor allowed Mamluk sultans to express even minuscule differences in rank and status among the recipients.[950]

According to Springberg-Hinsen, it is possible to differentiate between at least five purposes for which robes of honor, as highly charged symbolic and polyvalent objects,[951] were used in Islamicate societies. First, rulers could employ *khilʿa*s to acknowledge and reward the achievements and services of their subordinates, especially since robes of honor were usually of considerable material value and could be sold for cash.[952] By accepting robes from rulers, receivers accepted the donors' superior rank and committed themselves to continued loyal service.[953] Second, robes of honor were instrumental in visualizing their recipients' status and could express changes in rank, for example, in rituals of investiture.[954] Third, robes of honor also reflected their presenters' wealth and generosity—an observation that, according to Springberg-Hinsen, helps explain why high-ranking Islamicate rulers never received *khilʿa*s, but only bestowed them on others.[955] Fourth, robes of honor also expressed that their receivers enjoyed the protection of the persons who granted them and therefore, they served as physical tokens of assurances of security (sg. *amān*).[956] Fifth, granting a *khilʿa* could also represent a partial transfer of the ruler's authority to the receiver, again especially in rituals of investiture.[957]

Against this background, how can we explain the sultan's bestowal of robes of honor on his clients? It is noteworthy that the sultan granted his civilian

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948   On ʿAbbasid robes of honor, see Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 59–128; Sourdel, Robes.

949   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 195.

950   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 195. On Mamluk robes of honor, see also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 52–4; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* iii.1, 735–9; Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 194–228; Mayer, *Costume* 56–64; Diem, *Kleid* 8–80, 132–4; Petry, Robing; Baker, Dress 181; Broadbridge, Conventions 109–12; Stowasser, Manners 17–8.

951   On the symbolic character and polyvalence of robes of honor, see Gordon, Robes; Gordon, Word 5, 14–5.

952   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 30. See also Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 201; Petry, Robing 366–70.

953   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 30. See also Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 32, 202; Walker, Rethinking 185; Mayer, *Costume* 62; Diem, *Kleid* 61, 67; Hambly, Baghdad, esp. 215; Paul, *Herrschaft* 267.

954   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 30. See also Paul, *Herrschaft* 271.

955   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 30–1. See also Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 207.

956   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 31–2. See also Petry, Robing 370–2; Paul, *Herrschaft* 269–71.

957   Springberg-Hinsen, *Ḥilʿa* 33–4. See also Mayer, *Costume* 60; Petry, Robing 354–60.

clients particularly valuable sable-lined *kāmiliyya* robes that were usually only given to the highest-ranking military officers.[958] This suggests that al-Ghawrī wanted to highlight the significance of the occasion through the choice of this particular type of robe. Moreover, if we interpret the robes as rewards for their recipients' loyal service, the high intrinsic value of the *khil'a*s could be seen as a demonstration of the sultan's gratitude and as a manifestation of his largesse and munificence. By accepting these particularly lavish gifts from the sultan, the recipients, who represented influential groups of the civilian element of the court, acknowledged and confirmed al-Ghawrī's status as ruler.

Although the sultan had reaffirmed his claim to uncontested rule vis-à-vis several key groups in the wider court through the events discussed thus far, the culmination of his celebrations on the occasion of his recovery was yet to come. On the same day on which he met with the *amīr*s and bestowed the robes of honor, the sultan ordered the *muḥtasib* of Cairo and several other high-ranking civilian officials to traverse the capital adorned in yellow silk clothes and announce that the city should be decorated in celebration of the sultan's recovery.[959] In reaction, the people "raised [their] voices in wishes of well-being [for the sultan], and the women began to utter trilling sounds for him from the arched windows."[960] In Birkat al-Raṭlī, the entertainment quarter of Cairo, a bonfire was lit for three consecutive weeks and the people celebrated al-Ghawrī's well-being with music and fireworks.[961]

From 5 Sha'bān/6 October onward, Cairo was splendidly decorated for a week as if one of the two major Islamic holidays was coming up, and drums were beaten twice a day at the citadel and the *amīr*s' homes.[962] Ibn Iyās noted: "Nothing like this had ever happened in Egypt on the occasion of the recovery of a sultan or *amīr*. This was because of the [peoples'] esteem (*wajāha*) for the sultan and because of his reputation (*zūkira*)."[963]

In addition to the people's joy about the sultan's well-being and their high regard for him—feelings which demonstrate that not everyone shared Ibn Iyās' general negative appraisal of al-Ghawrī—the chronicler gives a second explanation for the lavish celebrations:

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958   Petry, Robing 354–5, 357.

959   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 333.

960   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 333.

961   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 333–4.

962   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 334.

963   Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* iv, 334. With regard to *zūkira*, I follow Badawi and Hinds, *Dictionary* 375, who note that the root *dh-k-r* is often pronounced as *z-k-r* in Egyptian Arabic; therefore, I understand the word as a colloquial form of *dhukra* (reputation, repute, renown).

The reason for the richness of this decoration was that news had spread in the lands of the eastern and western parts [of the Nile Delta] that the sultan had gone blind in both eyes. Therefore, the sultan wanted to have this decoration displayed so that it would spread throughout the lands that the sultan had been cured and that the pain in his eyes had ceased. Thus, he gave orders that Cairo should be decorated and that the drums should be beaten.[964]

According to this passage, the population of the capital was not the only audience for the decorations and musical performances the sultan organized. Rather, the sultan aimed at demonstrating to the population of Egypt at large that he had overcome his disease and reestablished his uncontested rule. Therefore, al-Ghawrī, aware of the position of Cairo as the political, religious, economic, and social center of Egypt as well as its most important inland traffic hub, staged lavish celebrations in the capital in order to convey the message of his recovery throughout the Egyptian provinces.

The sultan's recovery was also celebrated in other regions of the sultanate. For example, we learn from Ibn al-Ḥimṣī that Damascus and other Syrian localities were decorated for eight days after the arrival of the news that the sultan had been cured.[965]

While the decoration activities and celebrations in Cairo continued, the sultan took further steps to reestablish his control over the Mamluk military. During meetings with members of the army in the courtly spaces of the citadel courtyard and his *maydān*, al-Ghawrī gave orders to prepare an expedition to Suez. In contrast to the earlier attempt to send troops to this city mentioned above, this time the soldiers obeyed his command, although at least some of them were not content with the campaign supplies they received.[966]

With these military affairs settled, the sultan resumed his ceremonial activities. Two days after Cairo had been decorated, the sultan went to the gardens of al-Maṭariyya northeast of Cairo where he had built some structures. Moreover, he ordered a civilian administrative official in the army to inform all the *amīr*s that on the next day the sultan was going to ride from al-Maṭariyya through Cairo in a formal parade.[967] Thereupon, all the high-ranking *amīr*s present in the city, including those from whom the sultan had earlier feared opposition

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964   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 335.
965   Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān* ii, 246–7.
966   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 335.
967   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 335.

during his ailment, went out to al-Maṭariyya. There, the sultan entertained them with a lavish banquet and they spent the night there together with him. Ibn Iyās does not provide details on what took place during this banquet, but apparently, this gathering in the relaxed atmosphere of the gardens outside Cairo was another step in the sultan's attempt to reestablish amicable relations with the leading officers of the army and reintegrate them into his court society.

The chronicler's account is more detailed about the events of the following day:

> The sultan rode from the domed building [at al-Maṭariyya] and in front of him [rode] all the *muqaddam amīr*s, the *amīr*s [entitled to a] military band, the [*amīr*s] of ten, and all the civilian officeholders, the notables (*aʿyān*) of the realm, and the entire army. The sultan had wanted the parasol (*qubba*) and the bird (*ṭayr*) to be held over his head, but the *amīr*s prevented him from doing this and said: "It is not customary that the sultan, if he leaves for al-Maṭariyya, has the parasol and the bird held over his head." Therefore, the sultan refrained from doing this.
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> Then, the sultan entered [the city] via Bāb al-Naṣr[968] and traversed Cairo in a splendid parade (*mawkib*). The communitie[s] of the Jews and the Christians met with him with burning wax candles in their hands. In front of him marched the civilian officeholders dressed in yellow silk, and likewise the syndic of the army, the prefect, the leading eunuchs, and the sultan's son. In front of him the captains of the guard, with maces, marched from Bāb al-Naṣr to the citadel. Then the near horses with embroidered trappings were led in front of him.[969] In front of him marched the sultanic [players] of lutes (*awzān*),[970] flutes (*shabbāba*),[971] and the Burghushī trumpet (*nafīr*),[972] as well as the sultanic heralds (*majāmiʿ*)[973] with the saddle cloth of yellow silk.
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> None of the *amīr*s and the soldiers wore full ceremonial dress during this parade, and the sultan could not wear the large light turban due

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968   On this gate, which constitutes one of the northern entries to the fortified area of Cairo, see Popper, *Notes* 24.

969   On horses in Mamluk parades, see Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 53–4.

970   My translation follows Farmer, ʿŪd 769.

971   On this term, see Popper, *Notes* i, 84.

972   My translation follows Farmer, Ṭabl-Khāna 35.

973   My translation follows Ibn Iyās, *Journal* 314.

to the condition of his eyes. Rather, during this parade he wore a well draped small light turban (*takhfīfa ṣaghīra*)[974] and a white Baʿlabakkī Sallarī tunic.[975] In front of him most of [his] bodyguards marched from Bāb al-Naṣr to the citadel.

[The sultan] had a memorable day and the people lined up on top of the shops to see him. Drums and *zamr*s[976] had been brought together for him in several localities in Cairo. The women began to utter trilling sounds for him from the arched windows. Cairo had been lavishly decorated for seven days, wax candles and glass lamps (*qanādīl*)[977] had been lit in hanging lamps during the daytime in the shops and [the people] burned incense for [the sultan] in censers. The sultan remained in this lavish procession according to what we mentioned until he went up to the citadel.[978]

Here Ibn Iyās describes a refined courtly ceremony of communicative significance in the form of a parade, the like of which took place repeatedly under al-Ghawrī.[979] The following questions can help us approach it from an analytical perspective: (a) Who were its participants? (b) What role did material objects play? (c) What was its spatial context? (d) Who was its audience? (e) What was its communicative significance?

(a) Apart from Sultan al-Ghawrī, Ibn Iyās mentions several groups of participants in the parade, including numerous members of the military, among them all the high-ranking *amīr*s, a significant number of *amīr*s of medium and lower ranks, and "the entire army"—a term that probably refers to the Cairo garrison. In addition to these military components in a narrow sense, all non-military officeholders, as well as unspecified local notables, participated in the *mawkib*, too. To this we can add several participants who stood between

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974   On this headgear, see Mayer, *Costume* 16–7.
975   On this type of clothing in the case of al-Ghawrī, see also Petry, Robing 363.
976   On this reed instrument, see Farmer, Mizmār 277.
977   My translation follows Gibson, Glass 268.
978   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 335–6. "Parade" and "procession," are used interchangeably here. On the problem of their differentiation in Islamicate contexts, see Oesterle, *Kalifat* 78–9.
979   On Mamluk parades and related events, see, e.g., Bresc, Entrées 88–94; Holt, Mawākib; McGregor, Sufis, esp. 219; McGregor, Networks; van Steenbergen, Ritual 232–41; Stowasser, Manners 19; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 74–6; Sanders, Mawākib 850; Rabbat, *Staging*, esp. 17–21, 37, 39–40; Rabbat, *Citadel* 171, 238; Chaptout-Remadi, Symbolisme, esp. 61, 64–9; Fuess, Between 153–6; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 28–9; Walker, Rethinking 194; Frenkel, Projection 45–50; Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 50–1, 53–5.

the civilian and the military domains, including al-Ghawrī's son and the high-ranking eunuchs.[980] Moreover, a group of musicians was also present.

How can we make sense of this list of participants? The people to whom Ibn Iyās refers here were large segments of al-Ghawrī's court society in its broadest form; moreover, they were accompanied by numerous rank-and-file soldiers who did not regularly interact with the sultan directly and thus did not belong to his court in a strict sense. It seems that during this parade, possibly apart from some religious and scholarly functionaries, the Mamluk court society as it existed in Shaʿbān 919/October–November 1513 was assembled more or less in its entirety.

Remarkably, Ibn Iyās also mentions representatives of the Jewish and Christian religious minorities interacting with the sultan during the procession, although there is no evidence that these people belonged to the sultan's court society in any sense. It appears that they also did not participate in the parade directly, but merely met the sultan as he was passing by.

(b) Ibn Iyās' account indicates that material objects played a prominent role in the procession. The chronicler pays particular attention to the attire of the participants, many of whom wore yellow silk garments, that is, valuable clothing in the emblematic color of the Mamluk Sultanate. The sultan was still impaired by the symptoms of his eye disease and therefore paraded without the proper ceremonial headgear. Instead, he chose a type of attire that was similar to his everyday clothing, as featured in other accounts from his reign. The other military attendees likewise refrained from wearing their full ceremonial dress, probably in order not to outshine the sultan who, because of his physical condition, wore rather casual clothing.

The first few lines of the passage describing the preparations of the parade contain the intriguing information that the sultan had intended to use what is referred to as "the parasol (*qubba*) and the bird (*ṭayr*)" during the *mawkib*. However, the *amīr*s dissuaded him from his plans, arguing that such behavior would contradict established custom. What are we to make of this information, and what do the terms *qubba* and *ṭayr* mean in this context?

We find answers to these questions in Mamluk chancery manuals. Al-Saḥmāwī's work *al-Thaghr al-bāsim* includes a passage entitled "About what distinguishes the sultan from among the symbols of rule (*shiʿār al-mulk*) that he does not have in common with others."[981] As the author explains, the Mamluk sultans inherited elements of the arrangements of rule (*tartīb al-mamlaka*)

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980   On the sultan's eunuchs in the late Mamluk period, see al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat* 122.

981   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 379.

from earlier Muslim rulers such as the ʿAbbasids of Baghdad, the Fatimids, and the Ayyubids and, at least indirectly, also from pre-Islamic Persian rulers. Mamluk reliance on the customs of earlier dynasties was apparent in the twenty exclusive sultanic symbols of rule listed by the author.[982] These encompassed (1) the black sultanic garb (*ḥulla*) bestowed by the caliph during the sultan's investiture, (2) the sultan's throne (*sarīr al-mulk*), (3) the enclosed prayer space (*maqṣūra*), (4) the mentioning of the sultan's name in the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*), (5) the right to put his name on coins, the *kiswa* of the Kaʿba, and embroidered cloth, (6) the gold-embroidered saddle cloth (*ghāshiyya*), (7) the parasol (*miẓalla, sitr*, or *qubba*), (8) the yellow silk neckcloth (*raqaba*) of his horses, (9) the two mounted pages (*jaftāh*) accompanying the sultan during parades, (10) the silk banners (*ʿaṣāʾib*), (11) the flutes (*shabbāba*), (12) the Turkish lutes (*awzān*),[983] (13) the four singers (*jāwīshiyya*) chanting in front of the sultan during parades, (14) the axe carriers (*ṭabardāriyya*) guarding the sultan during parades,[984] (15) the sultans' dagger (*nimja*), (16) the coat of mail (*zardiyya*),[985] (17) a small piece of cloth called *kizāta*[986] that was rolled up and inserted on the right side between the tall sultanic *kalafta* headgear[987] and the muslin cloth (*shāsh*) worn on it,[988] (18) oblong pieces of silk (*shuqaq al-ḥarīr*) spread out on the ground for the sultan's horses to tread upon, (19) the mace bearer (*jumaqdār*)[989] accompanying the sultan during parades, and (20) the military band called the "guard of the lady" (*nawbat khātūn*)[990] beating drums at the citadel.[991]

Al-Saḥmāwī's description of the sultan's parasol (7) reads:

> Seventh: The parasol (*miẓalla*). It is also referred to as *sitr*, and some people call it *qubba*. It is made of light, gold-embroidered yellow silk and on its top is a bird plated [with precious metals] above a cupola plated

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982   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 379. On Mamluk reliance on earlier ceremonial cultures, see also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 6; Muslu, *Ottomans* 24; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 29–32; Holt, Position 243–5.

983   My translation follows Farmer, ʿŪd 769.

984   My translation follows Mayer, *Costume* 47.

985   My translation follows Mayer, *Costume* 34.

986   This term could not be located in the secondary literature. Its vocalization is tentative.

987   On this headgear, see Mayer, *Costume* 16–8, 21–2, 26, 28–30, 54, 58–9, 77–9.

988   Cf. for this particular meaning, Mayer, *Costume* 79.

989   My translation follows Popper, *Notes* i, 95.

990   My translation follows van Steenbergen, Ritual 228.

991   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 379–83. On Mamluk military bands, see Frenkel, Soundscape 5–7. My translations of technical terms are based on Popper, *Notes* i, 84–5, unless otherwise indicated.

[with precious metals]. It is held over [the sultan's] head during festive parades. Only the sultan's son, his brother, and the commander-in-chief of the army are qualified to hold it, and in Damascus and Aleppo their respective governor [can hold it].[992]

Al-Saḥmāwī's data can be supplemented with information from al-Qalqashandī's chancery manual, which includes three similar lists enumerating the objects of symbolic significance used by Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk rulers.[993] The most important list on the Mamluks includes many of the items enumerated by al-Saḥmāwī[994] and provides additional data on the parasol: According to al-Qalqashandī, the bird on top of it was made of silver plated with gold. The use of the parasol dated back to the Fatimid period and it was used by Mamluk rulers during parades on the two highest religious holidays.[995] Elsewhere, al-Qalqashandī writes that the parasol appeared only in "sublime (ʿiẓām) parades."[996] This suggests that the presence of the parasol could indicate the importance of *mawkib*s.

This last piece of information is central for our understanding of what took place during the preparations for the sultanic parade as described by Ibn Iyās. The sultan wished to have the parasol held over his head to highlight the significance of the parade on the occasion of his recovery. To this end, he wanted to use an object that was reserved for the most high-profile courtly events. This suggests that the sultan was not only fully aware of the symbolic significance of this object, but also sought to employ it to raise the communicative impact of his parade. The *amīr*s, however, objected, apparently by pointing out that technically, the *mawkib* in question constituted only the return from a recreational trip and that it would hence be against the established tradition to use the parasol.

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992   Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaghr* i, 381.

993   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* ii, 125–8 (Mamluks); iii, 472–5; iv, 6–9 (Ayyubids and Mamluks). On al-Qalqashandī's lists, see Vermeulen, Note; and on Mamluk symbols of rule, see also, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 26; Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 31; Björkman, *Beiträge* 92–3; Popper, *Notes* i, 84–5; Holt, Mawākib 612–3; Bresc, Entrées 83–4.

994   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 6–9 includes items (2), (3), (5), (6), (7), (9), and (10). Moreover, al-Qalqashandī treats the sultan's band and the special textiles he used in comprehensive summary entries. The only item listed by al-Qalqashandī but lacking a parallel in al-Saḥmāwī are the sultan's tents.

995   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* iv, 7–8. On the Mamluk parasol, see Holt, Miẓalla; and on the Fatimid one, see Oesterle, *Kalifat* 107–8, 146–7, 165; Sanders, *Ritual* 22, 25–7, 29, 64, 67, 89–90, 94–5, 104, 108.

996   Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* ii, 126–7.

The sultan yielded to the *amīr*s' arguments, possibly in order not to compromise the newly reestablished amicable relations with them. Later, he used the parasol in accordance with Mamluk custom during parades held on special occasions.[997] However, he did make innovative and unprecedented changes in the way Mamluk sultanic rule was expressed through this symbolic object by replacing the bird at its top with a crescent (*hilāl*).[998] Since pre-Islamic times, the *hilāl* had been closely related to traditions of rulership and was also employed with these connotations in the Islamic middle period.[999] A parasol with a crescent on the top might have constituted to Muslim onlookers of this time a more readily understandable emblem of rulership than the somewhat archaic and (probably) originally Turkic symbol of the bird that also conflicted with widespread interpretations of Islamic law forbidding the production of figures of animated beings.[1000] Thus, while the sultan maintained the basic form of the parasol and participated in an ancient tradition of the symbolic representation of rule, the change of its design gave al-Ghawrī an opportunity to establish a close connection between his name and one of the most important Mamluk symbols of rule. Moreover, this conscious change of design shows that the sultan took a lively interest in the material objects that functioned as symbols of his rule.[1001]

The sultan's attention to these symbols also becomes apparent in the remainder of Ibn Iyās' description, given above, of the parade staged after his recovery. Although the *amīr*s dissuaded al-Ghawrī from having the parasol displayed during the *mawkib*, other *shiʿār al-mulk* were present. Ibn Iyās explicitly mentions the items numbered (6), (11), and (12) in al-Saḥmāwī's list, that is, the saddle cloth, flutes, and lutes as present during the parade. Moreover, one can interpret his reference to soldiers bearing maces as indicating that item (19), that is, the mace bearers, was also included. As for other symbols of rule, it is

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997   E.g., Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 412, 418 (the sultan's departure ceremonies), 423 (entry into Alexandria); Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Iʿlām al-warā* 212 (entry into Damascus); Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab* ii.1, 52 (entry into Aleppo). Before entering Damascus, al-Ghawrī inquired about the details of Qāytbāy's earlier ceremonial entry (Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān* ii, 11). See also Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* viii, 114; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 95.

998   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 412. See also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 73–4; Salīm, *al-Ghūrī* 47.

999   Ettinghausen, Hilāl 381–3. For an interpretation linking the crescent to Ottoman practice, see Behrens-Abouseif, Citadel 68.

1000   On the bird as a Turkic "totem animal," cf. Spuler, *Iran* 345. Devonshire, Feature 281–2, links the bird to Turkic or Mongolian influence.

1001   This refutes the assumption in Devonshire, Feature 282, that the parasol had fallen out of use during the last decades of Mamluk rule.

possible that Ibn Iyās did not mention them because he was unaware of their presence or they were taken for granted. This might apply, for example, to the sultanic banners or the dagger. Other items, including the sultanic throne, were never intended to be part of processions or were not even physical objects, such as the right to strike the sultan's name on coins or to have it mentioned in the Friday prayer. Still others, especially those related to the ruler's clothing, could not appear in Ibn Iyās' account in the first place, given that al-Ghawrī was unable to wear full ceremonial dress because of his strained health. Hence, we can conclude that even though Ibn Iyās explicitly mentions only three symbols listed in al-Saḥmāwī's work, al-Ghawrī definitely sought to make sure that traditional Mamluk symbols of rule appeared in the parade held on the occasion of his recovery—a fact that was considerably important for its communicative significance, to which we return below.

Two further observations about the use of material objects during the parade are in order here. First, weapons and battle gear did not figure prominently, especially when compared with similar events described above[1002] that constituted veritable shows of Mamluk military might. The only weapons appearing in Ibn Iyās' account were the maces carried by the officers of the sultan's guard, and these could be understood as objects of primarily symbolic significance or as necessary security precautions. The evidence from surviving late Mamluk maces brought as spoils of war to Istanbul supports the former interpretation. Their rich decoration and high quality of production suggests that their makers' main concern was their visual appearance and not their functionality as weapons.[1003]

Second, the passage given above repeatedly refers to musical instruments played by participants in the parade and by spectators along the route.[1004] This suggests that the procession was not only a visual, but also an accoustically impressive courtly event. Furthermore, given that incense was burned along its route, the parade evidently engaged multiple senses at once.

(c) Turning to the spatial context of the event, we note that Ibn Iyās provides very limited information on the route of the parade, apart from the fact that it entered Cairo through Bāb al-Naṣr and ended at the citadel. The geography of late Mamluk Cairo, however, helps us to reconstruct its route quite precisely. Entering the walled area of the city from the north in the vicinity of al-Ḥākim Mosque, the procession most probably traversed the capital in southbound

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1002   See section 2.1.2.3 above.
1003   Cf. Stöcklein, Waffenschätze 214–5.
1004   On musical performances in Mamluk parades, see also Chaptout-Remadi, Symbolisme 69.

direction along its main traffic artery. Known in its northern part as Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, this street transected the city largely parallel to the Cairo Canal from north to south (referred to as "Main Avenue" on map 6.1).[1005] Probably at the height of the Rumayla area where the *maydān* was located, the parade then turned east and headed toward the citadel.

By taking this route, it might appear that the sultan and those around him had simply selected the shortest and most direct way from al-Maṭariyya in northeast Cairo back to the citadel. However, if swift and secure travel was the ruler's only concern, he easily could have bypassed the city of Cairo entirely and reached the citadel from the east. Rather than explaining the parade route in practical terms, we should understand it as part of a strategy to maximize the communicative impact of the event. Apart from circling through the entire city, no other possible route could have secured the same level of attention among the inhabitants of Cairo. Moreover, this route had often been used by parading Mamluk rulers,[1006] thus this established a performative connection between al-Ghawrī and the Mamluk tradition of rule.[1007] The long-lasting preference for this particular itinerary can be explained by the fact that "[t]he monumental gates, the decorated streets, and the ramparts of the Citadel together formed a backdrop rich with symbols of power,"[1008] as Richard McGregor observed. Moreover, numerous endowed complexes funded by Mamluk sultans and showcasing sultanic grandeur and piety were located along the route, too.[1009]

Having clarified the route of the parade, we may turn to the relative spatial arrangement of its participants. As was customary in Mamluk sultanic parades,[1010] the sultan apparently traversed Cairo at the very end of the procession, given that Ibn Iyās listed all the other participants as walking in front of the ruler. The chronicler depicts the other participants as marching in groups, suggesting that there was no mingling between military and civilian personnel.

We may assume that the members of the military who were responsible for the sultan's personal security accompanied him closely. As for the remainder

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1005   On Bayn al-Qaṣrayn in Mamluk ceremonial and ritual life, see van Steenbergen, Ritual.

1006   McGregor, Sufis 219. See also McGregor, Networks 312–3; Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 74; Rabbat, *Staging* 17, 37; Rabbat, *Citadel* 238; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 28.

1007   For a similar approach to ritual and ceremonial practices in the same location, see van Steenbergen, Ritual, esp. 232.

1008   McGregor, Sufis 219.

1009   Cf. for prominent complexes located there, van Steenbergen, Ritual 243; Rabbat, *Citadel* 238.

1010   Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks* 54. This spatial arrangement is notably different from roughly contemporaneous European parades, where the most distinguished participants were usually first, cf. Weller, Ordnen 202.
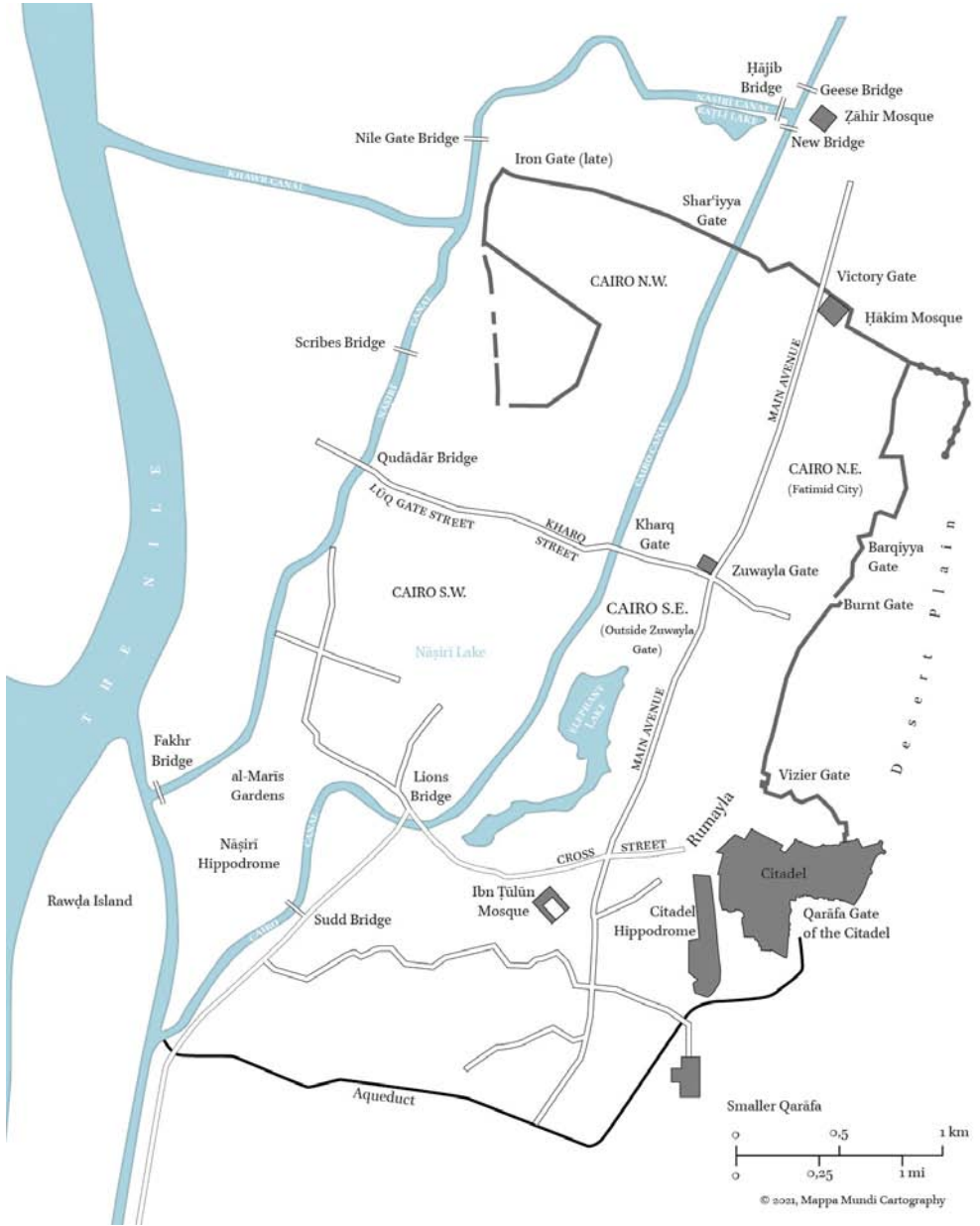
MAP 6.1   Map of late Mamluk Cairo, based on Popper, *Notes* i, 62, map 6.

of the participants, in his very first sentence about the parade, Ibn Iyās seems to provide a general, though not very detailed description of its structure. To repeat this sentence: "The sultan rode from the domed building [at al-Maṭariyya] and in front of him [rode] all the *muqaddam amīr*s, the *amīr*s with military band, the [*amīr*s] of ten and all the civilian officeholders, the notables of the realm and the entire army."[1011] Since we know that the sultan was at the very end of the parade and that the other participants joined the parade in groups, it stands to reason that the arrangement outlined here is in reverse order from back to front. Hence, to an observer in the streets of Cairo, the parade probably appeared as follows: First came numerous rank-and-file soldiers, then the civilian notables of the realm, and subsequently the non-military officeholders, who were followed by the officers of the army in ascending order of rank, with the highest *amīr*s immediately preceding al-Ghawrī. The sultan stood out among the participants not only for his position at the rear; Ibn Iyās' account also indicates that he was the only participant on horseback and thus was physically higher than the entire *mawkib*.

(d) Ibn Iyās' information about the audience of the event suggests that the sultan's efforts to draw as much attention to his parade as possible, by traversing almost all of Cairo, were crowned by success. The people of the city flocked in such large numbers to the venue of the parade that some of them stood on the roofs of buildings to have a better view. Moreover, both men and women attended.

The inhabitants of Cairo were more than mere spectators—they contributed in several ways to the special character of the event. Musical performances were organized along the route and the local women added to the parade's soundscape by making trilling sounds as signs of joy.[1012] Visually, the population of the city contributed to the special atmosphere by decorating and illuminating the streets. By burning incense, the people emphasized the exceptional character of the event in an olfactory way, and thereby expressed their goodwill toward the sultan.

By attending the parade and engaging in these practices, the people of Cairo made decisive contributions to the success of the event. Rather than just an audience, they became participants who conveyed messages of their own.[1013] To understand the significant role of the inhabitants of Cairo in this communicative exchange on the occasion of the sultan's recovery, we only have to imagine

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1011   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 335.
1012   On this practice as an expression of the population's satisfaction with rulers, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 75.
1013   See also Chaptout-Remadi, Symbolisme 68.

what would have happened if the inhabitants of Cairo had not uttered sounds of joy when seeing the sultan, but had rather cursed the ruler and thrown rubbish at him[1014]—or, possibly even worse, had not attended the parade at all.[1015]

Similarly, those marching with the sultan in the parade not only played active roles in the event, but were also recipients of at least some of the messages conveyed through it, be it by experiencing the joy of the attending crowd, observing the behavior of the fellow paraders, or listening to the musical performances of the sultan's band. Hence, any simplistic differentiation between actors and audiences would be misleading in the case of this highly complex communicative event.

(e) Yet, what exactly was the communicative significance of the event? Given that weapons and battle gear did not feature prominently in the parade, it was evidently not intended as a show of Mamluk military strength. Moreover, valuable goods were not distributed,[1016] nor were religious practices performed. This indicates that the parade was not intended as a demonstration of sultanic generosity or piety.

Rather, we can argue that one of the most important communicative objectives of the parade was to demonstrate to as large an audience as possible that the sultan was not only alive, but also able and willing to rule as the undisputed holder of the sultanate. Accordingly, the sultanic *mawkib* can be interpreted, first and foremost, as a dramatization of al-Ghawrī's reestablished status vis-à-vis both those in the parade and the inhabitants of Cairo. For their part, the participants expressed their consent to the sultan's reemergence as supreme ruler by playing their roles in the ceremony.[1017]

Several observations support this interpretation. First, the fact that the sultan staged a parade through all of Cairo shortly after his recovery indicates that he sought to performatively signal to as large an audience as technologically possible that he was cured and continued to rule. We must remember that sultanic parades were one of the few types of events in which very large segments of the Mamluk population could perceive their rulers' pres-

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1014   For the throwing of rubbish on parading Mamluk rulers, cf. Meloy, Processions 643.
1015   For a Mamluk parade that was aborted for lack of spectators, see McGregor, Networks 311.
1016   On parades during which distributions of alms took place, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture* 75.
1017   On participation in ceremonies as expressions of the acceptance of the political status quo in the Mamluk context, cf. Broadbridge, Conventions 107–8; and for the Fatimid context, see Oesterle, *Kalifat* 154.

ence and directly visualize their status.[1018] Second, the conscious decision to include several traditional Mamluk symbols of rule in the parade is a strong indication that the staging of the event carried the political message that its organizer al-Ghawrī was the rightful ruler of the Mamluk realm.[1019] Third, the yellow clothing of many of the participants in the procession likewise highlighted its political communicative character, given that yellow was widely recognized as the official color of the Mamluk Sultanate.[1020] Fourth, the spatial arrangement of the parade, with the sultan riding in the most prominent place at its end and as the only mounted member, clearly expressed the submission of all other participants under the sultan's rule, including the highest-ranking *amīr*s who only a few weeks earlier had plotted to remove him. Fifth, the spatial context of the parade indicates that by traversing the streets of Cairo, the sultan had reclaimed and reaffirmed his status as ruler over the Mamluk capital and thus, by extension, over the Mamluk realm at large. Thereby, he projected his rule on the space of the city by means of a parade that took precisely the route that earlier rulers had used for the same purpose.[1021]

Yet, the significance of the *mawkib* was apparently not limited to a dramatization of the sultan's rule. It also served to reestablish and symbolically express the internal order of al-Ghawrī's court society as a social group.[1022] As seen above, shortly before the event, the sultan's court society had shown clear signs of advanced disintegration and the outbreak of open hostilities seemed to be only a question of time. However, a few weeks or even days later, the very people who had been on the verge of fighting each other were marching peacefully side-by-side through the streets of Cairo. Moreover, they did not march in a random fashion, but rather in a strict spatial arrangement that represented and confirmed their hierarchical status. In fact, we can argue that the arrangement of the parade was a spatial enactment and a visual expression of the very political structure of the Mamluk court, one that not only reinforced existing hierarchies, but also made them directly observable and experienceable to the spectators and, probably more importantly, to the members of the sultan's court society marching in the parade.[1023] Concomitantly, the arrangement

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1018   Cf. for the importance of Mamluk parades as an opportunity for interactions between the ruler and the ruled Meloy, Processions 642–3.

1019   For the Fatimid case, see Sanders, *Ritual* 68.

1020   Cf. section 4.1.2.3 above.

1021   Interpretation based on Geertz, Centers 153.

1022   On parades and processions as ways of expressing and affirming social orders, see Weller, Ordnen 201–2.

1023   Argument inspired by Geertz, Centers.

reinforced the latter's understanding of itself as a group apart and strengthened their sense of membership and belonging, the spectators' importance for the success of the event notwithstanding. That is, the parade dramatized, visualized, and performatively confirmed the shared superior position of the members of the court, their unity as a social group, and their internal hierarchical differences vis-à-vis each other, their ruler, and the rest of the population of the sultanate. Therefore, we can conclude that holding the parade was a central instrument in al-Ghawrī's efforts to overcome the crisis caused by his poor health, to reestablish his court society as an internally stratified social entity, and to legitimate anew his exalted status.

The sultan's ceremonial activities did not end when the parade reached the citadel. Ibn Iyās' account of the day continues:

> Then, all of the notables of the civilian officials began to present lavish gifts to the sultan, including gold, cloth, sugar, sheep, and other things. A group of *amīr*s from among the sultan's intimates (*akhiṣṣāʾ*) likewise presented him with lavish gifts, including horses, wool, lynx fur, gray squirrel fur, and other things. On this day [the sultan] bestowed on them red velvet sable-lined robes of honor (*kawāmil*). He did not bestow robes on those who did not present him with some kind of gift.[1024]

Here Ibn Iyās describes a reciprocal exchange of gifts between many, but explicitly not all members of the sultan's court society, and the ruler. While all of the highest-ranking civilian figures of the court seem to have offered gifts that apparently constituted mostly local products, only selected military officers characterized as the sultan's intimates presented him with gifts that included imported luxury items and horses. The sultan reciprocated by bestowing particularly valuable robes of honor on those members of his court who had given him gifts. Awarding these robes can be interpreted as a performative confirmation of existing hierarchical structures and, given the earlier tensions between the sultan and some of his *amīr*s, also as a reassurance of the *amīr*s' personal security.

The most important aspect of this exchange was that only select members of the court were involved. One possible interpretation suggests that those members of the inner circles of the sultan's court society who stood in direct patronage relationships with him sought to express their continued interest in maintaining their client-status by making symbolic offerings to the sultan

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1024   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 337.

in the form of the gifts listed by Ibn Iyās. The sultan, in turned, reassured his clients that they would continue to enjoy his favor through the symbolic and highly charged gifting of *kāmiliyya* robes.

Concomitantly, the exchange of gifts also signaled who belonged to the sultan's court society, but was not a member of its innermost circles—namely, all those civilian notables, administrators, and military officers who participated in the parade, but did not receive a robe of honor afterward. Thus, the robing ceremony was a way to reconstitute and express the internal structure of the sultan's court society by reflecting that structure in terms of personal proximity to the sultan after the preceding parade had reestablished the sultan's court as a larger social entity. Notably, those army officers who thanks to their military retinue might have been less dependent on the sultan's favor than the leading civilian administrators, were among the members of the court who did not reenact and stabilize their patronage relationship with al-Ghawrī through the symbolic exchange of gifts.

Although the parade through Cairo and the following gift exchange can be considered the climax of the month of celebration after the sultan's recovery, it did not end there. Rather, for the rest of this month the sultan continued to engage in events of communicative significance such as a troop review;[1025] a recreational outing to the Nile island of al-Rawḍa, including a banquet and musical performances;[1026] an extended inspection tour leading to Old Cairo and then along the Nile back to the citadel, during which the sultan received the well-wishes of the inhabitants of Cairo;[1027] and another trip to the garden area of al-Maṭariyya.[1028] While these events seem to have been less high-profile than those discussed earlier, they enhanced the sultan's visibility vis-à-vis his subjects and contributed to the reaffirmation of his rule. Furthermore, the apparently rather modest scale of these events can be understood as indicating that the sultan's courtly activities were slowly but steadily returning to their normal level before the sultan's infirmity.

Taken together, the courtly events that al-Ghawrī staged during the month of Shaʿbān 919/October–November 1513 can be understood as having served two main interrelated communicative purposes, in addition to being potentially sincere expressions of joy about the sultan's recovery and the ensuing resolution of psychological tensions. On the one hand, the sultan sought to demonstrate to key Mamluk audiences, including the highest-ranking military

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1025   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 337.
1026   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 337.
1027   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 338.
1028   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 338.

commanders, the army at large, the civilian administrators, the population of Cairo, the inhabitants of the Nile Delta, and possibly also himself, that he was again able and willing to fully resume his duties as ruler after having been indisposed for several months. Hence, the events can be seen as forming part of a performative campaign for al-Ghawrī to reclaim and reaffirm his position.

On the other hand, the events were also instrumental in al-Ghawrī's efforts to reconstruct his court society as a social group after its disintegration during his ailment. To this end, practices such as homage ceremonies, parades, and gift exchanges were employed to reconstitute the sultan's court society, improve its internal cohesiveness, reaffirm its internal hierarchies, and set it apart from other social groups.

In itself, it is noteworthy that al-Ghawrī responded to the major crisis of his rule that resulted from his illness by staging a comprehensive ceremonial program. Moreover, establishing that this program served to ceremonially reconstitute the Mamluk court allows us to gain deeper insights into the structure and character of the court itself. As noted above, the Mamluk Sultanate, its court, and its ruling apparatus are commonly perceived as thoroughly militarized;[1029] similar assessments are brought forth with regard to Mamluk ceremonial.[1030] Does this characterization also apply to al-Ghawrī's court in light of the sample of events studied here?

First, we note that weapons did not play a significant role in the events described by Ibn Iyās and analyzed above. While material objects figure prominently in the parade staged to commemorate al-Ghawrī's recovery, in the exchange of gifts between members of the sultan's court society and the ruler, weapons are almost entirely absent. We may conclude that weapons as military objects par excellence were not important in the courtly events analyzed.

Second, the first courtly event staged after the sultan's recovery was not a troop review or a military parade, but rather a hearing of legal cases that inhabitants of Cairo could attend. Only thereafter did al-Ghawrī turn to his soldiers' material needs. If we take this chronological sequence as an indication of the sultan's priorities, we must deduce that military matters ranked second on the sultan's agenda.

Third, it is clear that many of the courtly events staged in Shaʿbān 919/October–November 1513 were of a decidedly military character in terms of their participants, with high-ranking *amīr*s fulfilling important functions. Especially in the more intimate court ceremonies staged by al-Ghawrī, the presence of

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1029   Cf. section 1.2.1 above.
1030   Broadbridge, Conventions 107.

select *amīr*s was a common feature, while larger events, such as the parade through Cairo or troop reviews at the *maydān*, included, almost by necessity, large groups of rank-and-file soldiers.

Fourth, the spatial structure of the sultan's parade in celebration of his recovery as reconstructed above was a very clear expression of the relative hierarchical status of key groups in the sultan's court society: The group physically and hierarchically closest to the sultan were the *muqaddam amīr*s, with the lower-ranking officers following thereafter. What is more, the arrangement of the parade also indicated that even the lowliest *amīr* surpassed the most prominent civilian administrators in rank, as expressed in and through the parade.

Fifth, Ibn Iyās very clearly indicated that, according to protocol, at least some *amīr*s were not only superior in rank to all civilians, but also enjoyed the sultan's special favor as members of the more intimate circles of his court society. Thus, select *amīr*s were placed in the most prominent subgroups of the sultan's court society, a placement that was not only based on abstract notions of hierarchy, but also on the, at least, equally important aspect of the sultan's goodwill.

Taken together, the court as reconstituted by al-Ghawrī during the ceremonial events of the month of Shaʿbān 919/October–November 1513, was to a considerable degree military in character, the apparent absence of weapons and the sultan's attention to civilian audiences notwithstanding. Yet, in reestablishing his supreme position, al-Ghawrī did not rely on military force—or economic incentives, for that matter—but on the dramatizing, integrating, ordering, and legitimating powers of court ceremonial.

6.3.4 *Literary Production and the Book Arts*

The three preceding sections showed how al-Ghawrī and his court used different strategies of verbal and non-verbal, discursive and symbolic communication to represent and legitimate the sultan's rule. While al-Ghawrī's salons provided opportunities for members of the court to engage in primarily verbal communication of discursive, but also symbolic character, the sultan's sponsorship of architectural projects and the minting of coins with images arguably representing these projects demonstrated the significance of non-verbal communicative strategies in late Mamluk court life. Similarly, parades, receptions, and other types of celebrations bear witness to the impact of performative and primarily non-verbal and symbolic communication. The analysis of literary production and the cultivation of the book arts in the context of al-Ghawrī's court yields additional insights into the complex entanglements of verbal and non-verbal, symbolic and discursive, performative and non-performative modes of courtly communication.

   As our previous analyses showed,[1031] the social and intellectual atmosphere of al-Ghawrī's court resulted in a vibrant literary life that can, however, only be fully understood against its broader political background. Since preceding chapters have focused on various aspects of this late Mamluk courtly literary culture, it may suffice here to recapitulate briefly some of our key findings about important texts produced under this sultan and their relation to political life. First, our three main sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* not only provide literary representations of these politically charged events which had representative and legitimating functions, but also belong to a genre of Arabic literature deeply connected to the court life of ʿAbbasid Baghdad, which in Mamluk times served as a point of reference for culture, ceremonial, and politics.[1032] Second, the first versified translation of the *Shāhnāme* into a Turkic language on al-Ghawrī's behalf not only constituted an important monument of early Ottoman Turkish literature, but also established a close link between al-Ghawrī and Maḥmūd of Ghazna, the patron of the original composition of the work who figured in late Mamluk political thought as a paragon of ideal rulership.[1033]

   Third, several of al-Ghawrī's soldiers produced copies of mirrors-for-princes for the sultan's library, while a civilian member of the court penned at least one other work of this genre.[1034] With their focus on advice for rulers and good governance, these texts were in themselves clearly of political significance. Moreover, the engagement with the material therein could be understood as a practice of legitimation, as it demonstrated that the ruler and those around him at least ostensibly sought to govern well.[1035] Fourth, a member of al-Ghawrī's court produced, with *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa*, a multilingual work that combined ethical advice from the early Islamicate period with Persian commentaries from the sixth/twelfth century, and Turkic paraphrases apparently originating from a late Mamluk context. Thus, more than anything, *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa* showcases the multilingualism of literary production at the late Mamluk court. Moreover, the existence of Haṭiboğlu's Arabic-Turkic work entitled *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı* indicates that *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa* was not the only work of its kind produced for al-Ghawrī, although the connection of *Sulṭān hitābı ḥacc kitābı* to the sultan's court is less clear than in the case of *Miʾat kalima fī ḥikam mukhtalifa*. Fifth, Sultan al-Ghawrī himself participated in the courtly production of literature by writing poetry in vari-

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1031   Cf. sections 3.1 to 3.3 above.
1032   Cf. section 3.1.4 above.
1033   Cf. sections 4.2.5 and 6.2.1 above.
1034   Cf. section 3.2.4 above.
1035   Cf. sections 4.2.8 and 6.2.2 above.

ous languages. These poems included explicit political statements, such as the assertion that God had ordained al-Ghawrī's rule; and there is evidence that these texts were recited by recruits in front of large audiences. Moreover, by writing poetry, al-Ghawrī participated in a widely shared tradition of literature production by Islamicate rulers of the late middle and early modern periods.[1036] Finally, the sultan's clients penned a considerable number of literary offerings and related texts for the ruler.[1037] The contents of these texts elucidate the ways in which the sultan's clients sought to represent and legitimate al-Ghawrī's political rule.

Thus, there can be no doubt that literary life blossomed at al-Ghawrī's court and that this florescence was related to the sultan's needs to represent his rule as legitimate, as the contents of the pertinent works show. However, a purely content-centered approach to this flowering of late Mamluk literary culture risks missing several of its most important features, including the communicative significance of books as physical objects and their role in performative practices of patronage and representation.

Several of the manuscripts produced at al-Ghawrī's court and scrutinized in the present study are remarkable for their high level of artistic quality and the significant economic capital invested in their production.[1038] For example, the manuscript of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* preserved in the Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi in Istanbul as Ahmet III 2680 is noteworthy not only for its use of various calligraphic scripts and multiple inks, but also for its skillfully executed titlepiece and the decorative medallion on its first page. These are of remarkably high quality and must have been produced by professional artisans.[1039] Similar high-quality decorative elements also feature, for instance, in the manuscript of *al-Majmūʿ al-bustān al-nawrī* with its multiple titlepieces.[1040]

The people producing the decorative elements of the manuscripts of *Kitāb Hidāyat al-insān* and *Ādāb al-mulūk* likewise executed this task with great care and used several colored inks, including gold ones.[1041] Such high-quality designs were typical of the group of manuscripts produced by *mamlūk*s for the sultan's library, as studied by Barbara Flemming. As discussed above, Flem-

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1036   Cf. sections 3.2.7 and 6.2.2 above.
1037   Cf. section 3.2.3 above.
1038   On book decorations and illuminations from al-Ghawrī's time in general, see also
         Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 35; and on calligraphy, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 99.
1039   Cf. section 3.1.1.1 and figures 3.1 and 3.2 above.
1040   Cf. section 3.2.3 and figures 3.7 and 3.8 above.
1041   Cf. section 3.2.4 above.

ming was able to identify more than twenty manuscripts that clearly came from a late Mamluk context, were produced by soldiers garrisoned at the citadel, and exhibited elaborate decorative features. Given that the present study has located several other manuscripts from this group without undertaking a systematic search for additional specimens, we may assume that a significantly larger number of lavishly decorated manuscripts—more than the twenty-three listed by Flemming—were produced by *mamlūk*s as part of their training.[1042] This suggests the existence of a workshop-like complex in or close to the Cairo Citadel that was dedicated to the production of elaborately decorated manuscripts.[1043]

Other manuscripts connected to al-Ghawrī's court, such as those of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*, were not decorated in the same lavish way, but still exhibit features typical of costly manuscripts, such as the use of finished high-quality paper, gold ink, richly decorated bindings, and more than one calligraphic script.[1044]

It is not possible to ascertain in every instance the precise connection between these decorated manuscripts and the sultan. However, in the case of manuscripts produced by al-Ghawrī's soldiers and for his library, it stands to reason that the ruler commissioned, at least in a general sense, the production of these works. Other manuscripts, including those of the *majālis* accounts, might have been presented to the sultan without being commissioned. At any rate, the large number of decorated manuscripts surviving from al-Ghawrī's library and produced in the cultural context of his court clearly demonstrates that members of his court society were interested in lavish manuscripts.[1045] This is especially noteworthy since earlier research indicated that it was primarily in endowed educational and religious complexes, "rather than in the palaces, that the Mamluk contribution to book culture took place."[1046]

Historians of the book arts study al-Ghawrī's reign not only for the lavishly, but in a late Mamluk context somewhat typically, decorated manuscripts discussed so far. Al-Ghawrī's tenure also stands out as an—albeit brief—exceptional heyday of Mamluk book illustration.[1047] While most illustrated Mamluk

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1042   Cf. section 3.5 above.
1043   On the contested question of Mamluk court workshops, see Rogers, Workshops, esp. 247–50; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 35; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 80, 97–8.
1044   Cf. sections 3.1.2.1 and 3.1.3.1 above.
1045   For the little information available on the libraries of Mamluk sultans, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 3, 17–9.
1046   Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 18.
1047   On its exceptionality, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 19.

manuscripts date to the early history of the sultanate, illustrated works from the late Mamluk period are rare and often considered rather unimpressive.[1048] Al-Ghawrī's reign, however, witnessed a sudden reemergence of the artistic tradition of Mamluk manuscript illustration, a reemergence that was apparently influenced, if not triggered by artists from the eastern Islamicate world who were trained in styles and techniques associated with Persianate and specifically Turkmen court contexts.[1049]

Art historians study this florescence of book illustration in al-Ghawrī's time primarily based on two manuscripts of Ottoman Turkish texts: The first is the two-volume copy of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* produced for the sultan that contains sixty-two miniatures depicting scenes from the *Shāhnāme* stories.[1050] Esin Atıl suggests that at least several of these illustrations were created by painters who had worked in Āq Qoyunlu territory and fled to the Mamluk realm as a consequence of the Safawid expansion.[1051] This interpretation tallies well with what we know about the cultural openness of al-Ghawrī's court and its entanglements with the eastern Islamicate world. Furthermore, the illustrators of al-Ghawrī's *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* relied, in part, on models found in an earlier illustrated Persian copy of the work that originated from the Āq Qoyunlu sphere of influence and found its way into the Mamluk, and later the Ottoman, sultans' libraries. Hence, craftsmen, along with illuminated manuscripts and their visual programs, all traveled to the Mamluk court from greater Iran.[1052]

However, not all of the illustrations of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* follow Persianate models, rather, some depict specifically Mamluk architectural and ceremonial elements.[1053] This indicates that the painters working for the Mamluk sultan not only relied on models from outside the sultanate when they developed the visual program of the manuscript, but also tried to "Mamlukize"[1054] their

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1048   Atıl, Painting 159. See also Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 35.

1049   Atıl, Painting 159. See also Atıl, Painting 162–3.

1050   Atıl, Painting 163, 166. On this manuscript and its decoration, see also section 3.3.2 above and the literature referenced therein.

1051   Atıl, Painting 166. See also Atıl, *Renaissance* 253; and on Turkmen and Persianate features in miniatures, see also Atasoy, Manuscrit 153–7; Atasoy, Minyatürleri 51, 54, 56, 58, 61, 63–4, 66.

1052   Atıl, Painting 166.

1053   Atıl, Painting 166–9. On Mamluk features in miniatures, see also Atasoy, Manuscrit 154–6; Atasoy, Minyatürleri 56, 58–9, 61–2, 65.

1054   I do not use this term here in the technical sense outlined in Van Steenbergen, Wing, and D'hulster, Mamlukization 11, esp. 565–6.

creations and integrate them into the cultural world of their patron.[1055] Thus, they achieved a remarkable synthesis of Persianate and Mamluk forms of visual expression.[1056]

The other important illustrated manuscript from al-Ghawrī's reign is the sultan's Ottoman Turkish *Dīwān*, held in Berlin.[1057] Its titlepiece, a reproduction of which adorns the front cover of the first volume of the present book, is executed in a style similar to the illustrations included in *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*. This suggests that its creator might have been involved in the production of both manuscripts.[1058] It depicts a ruler seated on an elevated platform and flanked by two standing figures. Their faces have been scratched off. The ruler wears what appears to be a golden crown and sits in a domed, pavilion-like structure with a golden bird at its top—a design element calling to mind the Mamluk *qubba* crowned by a bird, as discussed in the preceding section. Four columns topped by marble arches support the dome and the inlaid masonry below it. With alternating light and dark stones, these arches resemble the typical Mamluk design element of *ablaq* masonry mentioned above.[1059] Through the two columns at the back, one can see a tree, suggesting that the entire scene is situated in a garden or park. In front of the ruler, we see a structure that Atıl identified as a fountain and before it a table bearing a bottle, a cup, and a kind of container.[1060] Though we should not interpret this miniature in an overly simplistic manner, it stands to reason that the specific way it depicts a ruler could be connected to court life under al-Ghawrī, including his interest in horticulture and garden architecture.

Following Atıl, we can consider al-Ghawrī "an innovative patron" as he "was the only Mamluk sultan to reveal a strong interest in illustrated manuscripts"[1061] in the tradition of Persianate book painting. It seems plausible that al-Ghawrī was involved in specifying at least the general features of the visual program of the manuscripts of his *Dīwān* and the *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, given their close connection to his cultural and literary activities. This suggests that their production can help us to understand the significance of richly decorated and illuminated manuscripts for the sultan's political communication to which we return shortly.

1055   Atıl, Painting 169.

1056   For a similar conclusion, see Atasoy, Manuscrit 157–8; Atasoy, Minyatürleri 67–9.

1057   On this manuscript, see section 3.3.1 above.

1058   Atıl, Painting 169. See also Atıl, *Renaissance* 253.

1059   Cf. section 3.5 above.

1060   Atıl, Painting 169. On this miniature, see also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 75.

1061   Atıl, Painting 169 (both quotations). See also Behrens-Abouseif, Arts of the Mamluks 14.

At al-Ghawrī's court, books not only functioned as carriers of text and as objects of art, but also figured prominently in performative practices of courtly communication. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* in particular provides valuable information on the court's use of books as physical objects under al-Ghawrī. The final passages of the work suggest that a copy of it was physically presented to the sultan in order to regain the latter's favor.[1062] This demonstrates the importance that books as objects could have in performative court practices of reaffirming and stabilizing patronage relations. According to Thomas Bauer, once completed, nearly all literary works of the Mamluk period were presented to a dedicatee or some other high-profile reader.[1063] This suggests that, as indicated by the presentation of a copy of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* to the sultan, the mechanisms of communication by means of books as objects were apparently not limited to the courtly sphere, but constituted a common feature of Mamluk culture.

Books as physical objects played an important role in the court context of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions at least ten books that were physically present in the sultan's salons: a work about Sultan Baybars,[1064] a collection of prophetic traditions,[1065] a book of legal riddles,[1066] the legal compendium *al-Mukhtār fī madhhab Abī Ḥanīfa*,[1067] Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Mālik's (d. 672/1274) *Alfiyya* on grammar,[1068] a work about the sultan's funeral complex,[1069] at least three unspecified books of history,[1070] and several volumes of al-Zamakhsharī's Quran commentary.[1071] While some of these books were brought to the *majālis* by attendees, the origin of the remainder is unclear. It is tempting to assume, however, that they came from the sultan's library at the citadel, for which many of the manuscripts analyzed in the present study were produced.

Here, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* adds an important element to the picture. It narrates that al-Ghawrī and a member of his *majlis* disagreed on the proper inter-

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1062   Cf. section 3.1.1.3 above.

1063   Bauer, *Communication* 29.

1064   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16.

1065   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16.

1066   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 60. Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 22, also speaks of a book of riddles but does not indicate whether it was physically present in the sultan's *majlis*.

1067   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 171; (ed. ʿAzzām) 66. See section 4.2.1 above.

1068   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 171; (ed. ʿAzzām) 66.

1069   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 64.

1070   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 213–7, 219, 235, 251, 256; (ed. ʿAzzām) 97, 114, 128, 132. Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 251; (ed. ʿAzzām) 128, uses *tawārīkh* to refer to the works read during the *majlis*, thus implying at least three texts.

1071   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 138.

pretation of a part of Q 10:31, which states "[He] brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living." The sultan's interlocutor argued that this verse referred to chicklets hatching from eggs and eggs laid by chickens. When al-Ghawrī expressed doubts about this interpretation, his interlocutor sought to justify it by claiming that he had read it in a work of *tafsīr*. Thereupon, the sultan had many exegetical works (*tafāsīr kathīra*) brought to the *majlis*, none of which, however, supported the unfortunate attendee's interpretation. The sultan's interlocutor then acknowledged his defeat and al-Ghawrī explained that the verse in question referred to righteous children born to unbelieving fathers and unbelieving children born to righteous fathers.[1072]

This passage indicates that if need arose, the sultan and the members of his *majlis* could quickly consult numerous specialized exegetical works. Given that the *majālis* took place at the citadel which was physically removed from all other late Mamluk centers of learning, it seems plausible to assume that the *tafsīr* works in question formed part of the sultan's citadel library. This in turn suggests that the holdings of the sultan's library were available and used during courtly events such as al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Hence, we can conclude that the commission, production, exchange, and collection of literary works and manuscripts under al-Ghawrī was not only significant from the perspective of the history of literature and the book arts, but also influenced and shaped late Mamluk courtly life more broadly, including its performative and, at least indirectly, also its political aspects.

Against this background, we may ask why and with what communicative aims al-Ghawrī and other members of his court invested considerable economic, social, and cultural capital into the acquisition and production of literary works and manuscripts.

First, the sponsorship of literary projects and the production and collection of splendid manuscripts was apparently one of the most important ways in which al-Ghawrī expressed and demonstrated his wealth, generosity, and largesse toward his clients. In particular, the high quality of manuscripts directly commissioned by al-Ghawrī, such as that of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* or the sultan's Ottoman Turkish *Dīwān* indicate that the sultan identified the production of these objects as a useful strategy to assert his supreme command over the resources of the sultanate. Accordingly, the production and use of these manuscripts constituted, first and foremost, practices of conspicuous consumption.

1072   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī* (MS) 292–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 86.

Second, the production, presentation, and use of literary works and valuable manuscripts were ways to display the high level of cultural refinement and intellectual erudition of the sultan and his court. This point is especially important if we keep in mind that key works of al-Ghawrī's literary sponsorship such as *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī*, the mirrors-for-princes written for the sultan, or the accounts of his *majālis* were directly related to traditions of political, scholarly, and religious thought meaningful to Mamluk audiences of the early tenth/sixteenth century. Moreover, we should not underestimate the educational role of the production of texts and manuscripts at the sultan's court, especially with regard to works written by the sultan's *mamlūk*s. By ensuring that at least select groups among his soldiers received an education that enabled them to produce such works, al-Ghawrī could present himself as a ruler who not only cared for the intellectual needs of his courtly elite, but was also interested in improving the non-military skills of rank-and-file members of his army.[1073] This in turn supported al-Ghawrī's image as a well-lettered and cultured head of a court that functioned as a political, cultural, and scholarly center of its time, especially since "the very display of [...] literary culture and its patronage became an emblem of good governance"[1074] in the premodern Islamicate world.

Third, supporting literary and artistic activities was one of the primary ways in which al-Ghawrī sought to ensure that the Mamluk court could compete in the transregional competition for cultural predominance that characterized inter-courtly communication in the Islamicate world of the late middle and early modern periods.[1075] The fact that al-Ghawrī provided work opportunities for litterateurs and artisans who hailed from outside the Mamluk domains, such as the book painters responsible for the illustration of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* and the sultan's Ottoman Turkish *Dīwān*, or al-Sharīf, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, demonstrates that he sought to cultivate forms of intellectual and artistic expression at his court that also resonated throughout the Islamicate world more broadly. The book arts were of special significance in this context, as they constituted "in the contemporary Mongol, Timurid, Turcoman and Ottoman courts [...] a medium of regal self-representation,"[1076] as Doris Behrens-Abouseif noted. As we saw, the visual programs of the illustrated manuscripts and the contents of many of the works produced under

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1073 On the educational and didactic role of court literature, see esp. Meisami, *Court Poetry* 11–4, 38; Meisami, Genres 233, 237.

1074 Gruendler and Marlow, Preface v.

1075 On the impact of this competition on the support of literary life in the Mamluk-Ottoman case and a call for further studies, see Muslu, *Ottomans* 187.

1076 Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 35.

al-Ghawrī's patronage revealed a high degree of cultural openness, and also showed that people attached to the Mamluk court were able to produce works of literature and graphic art that meaningfully contributed to the transregional Islamicate cultural life of their time, despite the fact that the specific forms of art relevant here, such as book illustration, were often almost completely absent in the Mamluk cultural world prior to al-Ghawrī's ascension to the sultanate.

The titlepiece of al-Ghawrī's Ottoman Turkish *Dīwān*, which "recalls Timurid and Ottoman traditions,"[1077] according to Behrens-Abouseif and the illustrations of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* were not the only manifestations of the Mamluk receptivity to influences from the outside world. A recent study of the art of book binding under al-Ghawrī by Alison Ohta points in the same direction. Ohta shows that numerous bindings produced for al-Ghawrī's library exhibited distinctly Persian and Turcoman features[1078] and proposes "the presence in Cairo of binders [...] who had previously been employed in the Turcoman court ateliers."[1079] Moreover, the sultan's Ottoman Turkish *Dīwān* includes numerous *naẓīra*s or counterpart poems of texts by famous poets from outside the Mamluk Sultanate written in various Turkic language forms.[1080] Hence, the sultan's own literary activities constitute additional evidence that the Mamluk court was not isolated from cultural and literary currents in the broader Islamicate world. As Ira Lapidus has suggested, the late Mamluk flowering of the graphic arts and literature can be explained in part as a process in which "Mamluk patrons and artists [...] responded to the cultural achievements of their Iranian and Ottoman rivals."[1081]

Al-Ghawrī's possession of an apparently rather sizable library also fits well in this picture, given that in the transregional Islamicate political culture of the late middle period, owning a library was, as Philippe B. Keskiner argued, a way of "embodying" the "self-image" of rulers who sought to be recognized as cultured leaders.[1082] Through such transregionally shared notions of good rulership, al-Ghawrī's care for and use of his library gained additional significance beyond the practical and educational needs of his court.[1083]

1077 Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 75.
1078 Ohta, Bindings 217–20.
1079 Ohta, Bindings 218.
1080 Cf. section 3.3.1 above.
1081 Lapidus, Patronage 175.
1082 Keskiner, *Sultan* 145 (both quotations and general argument).
1083 On Mamluk military book collectors, see also, e.g., Irwin, Mamlūks 502; Mauder, *Krieger* 171; Mauder, Education; Franssen, Library; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book* 19.

Doris Behrens-Abouseif arrived at similar conclusions in her art historical analysis of al-Ghawrī's reign. She argued that al-Ghawrī's support for the arts should not be interpreted as a result of his religious feelings, but rather as an outcome of the sultan "constructing his image as […] a patron of secular arts, pursuing the kind of princely image that was cultivated by the Timurid, Safavid, and Ottoman princes, but was unfamiliar in the culture of the Mamluk court."[1084] The sultan's care for the arts was hence "part of a political agenda"[1085] to maintain the status of the Mamluk Sultanate vis-à-vis its rivals: "[B]y adopting the artistic language of the great powers at that time, the Ottomans and the Safavids, [al-Ghawrī] hop[ed] perhaps that this image might deter his enemies and perhaps rescue his kingdom."[1086] Thus, Behrens-Abouseif considers the literary and artistic activities at al-Ghawrī's court informed, in a significant way, by the transregional political situation, too. Yet, was the Mamluks' role indeed limited to merely "adopting" a foreign "artistic language" or did it also encompass a reconfiguration and further development of this idiom, given that some of the artistic and literary achievements at al-Ghawrī's court had a distinctively Mamluk character?

Fourth, the literary and artistic activities during al-Ghawrī's reign shed light on many other aspects of the sultan's strategies of representation and legitimation. Sources such as the *majālis* accounts or the prologue and epilogue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* provide ample information on the sultan's scholarly, ceremonial, religious, and architectural activities that were central for crafting and communicating his image as a well-lettered and generous ruler to multiple audiences. This is also quite evident in the present study, which relies largely on these very sources. Yet, it stands to reason that the verbal and visual representations of the sultan's pertinent activities were not only of interest to posterity, but also fulfilled an important function for al-Ghawrī's contemporaries, who could learn through texts and images about the ceremonial life of the sultan's court and his architectural projects, in case they did not perceive them directly. Even for those who participated in court ceremonial and were familiar with the sultan's support of material culture, these texts and illustrations could fulfill meaningful communicative and commemorative functions as expressions of a common cultural horizon shared among the sultan's court society.

These reflections lead us to a question essential to understanding the court's production of texts and images as a communicative strategy: Who were

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1084   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 84–5.
1085   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 85.
1086   Behrens-Abouseif, Arts 86.

its intended audiences? Unlike the sultan's sponsorship of architectural projects or the staging of large-scale courtly events such as parades, the production of literary texts and valuable books was ill-suited to address larger segments of the Mamluk population. Rather, the primary intended recipients must have belonged to quite a narrowly defined elite that was largely, if not entirely, identical to the sultan's court society. After all, the intended audience not only required advanced cultural skills to appreciate these works, but also access to the sultan's library at the citadel where the manuscripts in question were kept. In line with Barker's findings outlined earlier, this indicates that al-Ghawrī and those around him perceived the courtly elite as the most important audience for this type of legitimating activity. It is telling that the only person who definitely had access to at least one of the pertinent works, namely *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, was the Ḥanafī chief judge ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna who not only figured prominently among the scholarly and administrative elite of late Mamluk Cairo, but was also among the sultan's closest intimates.[1087]

A look beyond the Mamluk borders may help further elucidate the intended readerships and functions of valuable manuscripts at al-Ghawrī's court, especially since we have seen that Mamluk courtly book culture was intertwined with related practices in other parts of the Islamicate world.[1088] The Ottoman court is a particularly promising point of reference, given the manifold communicative connections between the Mamluks and the Ottomans on the one hand and the advanced state of knowledge about Ottoman courtly book culture on the other hand.[1089]

Emine Fetvacı showed that in the Ottoman context illustrated manuscripts comparable to the Mamluk *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* had a "limited audience" and "a more private function" than did, for example, large construction projects, as such manuscripts were available only to people with access to the inner part of the Ottoman sultan's palace.[1090] Hence, a "group of administrators, imperial household servants, male and female trainees, and of course, the imperial family formed the audience"[1091] of courtly illustrated manuscripts.

For members of the Ottoman court, illustrated manuscripts fulfilled important social functions:

1087   Cf. section 3.1.2.1 above.

1088   On Ottoman-Mamluk interconnections in book culture, see also Tanındı, Emirs.

1089   For the period relevant here see esp. Fetvacı, *Picturing*; Necipoğlu, Kafadar, and Fleischer (eds.), *Treasures*; and in the latter esp. Necipoğlu, Organization 17–24.

1090   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 18 (both quotations and general argument). See also Necipoğlu, Ḳânûn 211–2.

1091   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 25. See also Woodhead, Reading 70–3, 75.

Their very circulation and use gave illustrated manuscripts powerful agency in the formation of Ottoman courtly identity [...]. These books were made to be read and to educate, and to inform the opinions of their readers. [...] They were the depositories of an emerging Ottoman court culture, and were first and foremost objects of communication.[1092]

For the Ottoman elite, access to or possession of valuable illustrated manuscripts constituted "a status symbol, an outward sign of belonging to the cultural elite" whose members strived to fulfill the social role of the "literary courtier," thus participating "not only in Ottoman courtly culture, but also in the wider cultural spheres of the Islamic world."[1093] For them, the circulation of books, their collective reading, and subsequent discussion were important elements of their cultural practices as members of the elite and played a key role in shaping and reaffirming their common identity.[1094] Since the sultanic treasury worked almost like a "lending library"[1095] for those enjoying access to it, its books circulated rather freely in the inner part of the Ottoman palace.[1096] Moreover, the holdings of the treasury were apparently used for training purposes, and some of its books were lent out to young slaves going through the palatial educational system.[1097] This means that even "a manuscript created for a sultan certainly did not perish on the shelves of the treasury without being consulted by anyone else,"[1098] but could find an interested readership at court.

When compared to what we know about late Mamluk court manuscript culture, several of Fetvacı's results deserve special attention. First, in both the Mamluk and the Ottoman case, access to the sultan's book holdings, which was located in access-controlled spaces, was largely limited to members of the court, although it is unclear whether in the Mamluk case there was a lending system comparable to the Ottoman one.

While similar social groups seem to have had access to the book collections of the Ottoman and Mamluk sultans, Mamluk court readerships were probably more military in composition than those of the Ottomans, as is to be expected

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1092   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 25.
1093   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 20 (all quotations). On the cultural openness demonstrated by the holdings of the Ottoman palace library, see also Necipoğlu, Organization 42.
1094   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 26–7.
1095   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 29.
1096   See also Necipoğlu, Organization 30–3, 37; Kafadar, Amasya 95; Atçıl, Section 373; Fleischer and Şahin, Works 570.
1097   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 18, 29–31. See also Qutbuddin, Books 607, 610, 615; Necipoğlu, Organization 31–2; Necipoğlu, Ḳânûn 212.
1098   Fetvacı, *Picturing* 36.

given the highly militarized character of the Mamluk court. Strong evidence for this assumption appears in the prologue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* which states that among other reasons, al-Ghawrī had the Persian work translated into Ottoman Turkish so those around him could learn from it.[1099] This suggests that members of the military elite constituted at least a part of the target audience. Moreover, the fact that the work was written in a Turkic language is in itself a strong indication that it was produced with members of the Mamluk military in mind, among whom Turkic idioms functioned as linguae francae. The same argument could also be made regarding the sultan's Ottoman Turkish poetry, although we must acknowledge that in this case the choice of Ottoman Turkish might have been primarily informed by al-Ghawrī's language skills.

Second, the major role Ottoman palace book holdings played in educational practices is not without parallel in the Mamluk context, although the extent of our knowledge about the Mamluk case is much more rudimentary. In addition to the evidence discussed above, that *mamlūk* recruits directly contributed to the growth of the sultan's library by producing richly decorated manuscripts, we also saw that the sultan's slave soldiers who were trained in the citadel barracks at times learned scholarly texts by heart, with the sultan inspecting their progress in person in his *majālis*.[1100] It seems plausible that the texts these recruits used for their studies came from the sultan's library, if only because they could not easily access manuscript collections outside the citadel. If this assumption is correct, the use of the sultan's libraries for the education of a distinct social group closely attached to the ruler would constitute another common feature of Mamluk and Ottoman courtly book culture.

Third, as in the Ottoman case, there is evidence that literary texts and valuable manuscripts played a role in shaping and affirming a shared Mamluk courtly identity and a common understanding of the world. Again, *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* can serve as a case in point, as we know that figures associated with this work were important points of reference for historical, literary, and political thought at al-Ghawrī's court, as shown by references to people such as Alexander the Great or Maḥmūd of Ghazna in the *majālis* accounts.[1101] Yet, the heroes and the patron of the *Shāhnāme* were not just literary figures of a bygone time, they mattered in late Mamluk court discourses and shared practices of rulership and representation, as the attempts to liken al-Ghawrī to these men—both

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1099   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 18.
1100   Cf. section 4.1.2.4 above.
1101   Cf. section 6.2.1 above. On the literary impact of the *Shāhnāme*, see also section 4.2.5 above.

discursively and symbolically—exemplify.[1102] Hence, Ira Lapidus argued that this work "assert[ed] royal prerogatives, the grandeur of monarchy, and the identification of Mamluk rulers with Turkish princes. By choosing themes such as the histories of Alexander and ancient Persian kings, told in Turkish, the Mamluks asserted their claim to Turko-Persian and Middle Eastern traditions of royalty."[1103] Moreover, the fact that some of the illustrations of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* feature architectural and other elements that art historians have identified as decisively Mamluk indicates that the work was not perceived as alien, but rather as part of a shared cultural world. Thus, it could make a meaningful contribution to the development of a Mamluk courtly identity and worldview, one that not only suited the sultan's representative needs, but also created a sense of belonging among the members of his court society.

Likewise, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* can be interpreted as establishing a shared identity and social cosmos among at least select members of the sultan's court society, given that they could be read as literary witnesses of a common scholarly project to which multiple members of the court contributed. By presenting the *majālis* as shared intellectual endeavors that built on the inputs of various members of the court, the literary representations of the salons not only shaped the sultan's image, but also created a sense of belonging and community among those who participated in the debates there and later found their contributions reflected in literary works. This might also be a reason people such as 'Abd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, who had already participated in the events, invested time in reading their accounts. Moreover, even to those who did not attend these events directly, the works could provide a common frame of reference that served to orient the behavior, competence, and cultural outlook expected from members of the sultan's inner circle. Hence, it stands to reason that courtly literary production and consumption played a role in the enculturating establishment of a shared social reality among members of the Mamluk court, similar to Fetvacı's description of the Ottoman case, although more research is needed to bring our understanding of these processes in the Mamluk context to a comparable level.

Fourth, it seems that, as in the Ottoman case where the conveying of Ottoman cultural notions through literary texts and illustrated manuscripts did not lead to provincialism and cultural seclusion, but rather established linkages between the Ottoman court and the Islamicate world more broadly, the blossoming of literary life and the book arts at the late Mamluk court also contrib-

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1102   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.
1103   Lapidus, Patronage 176.

uted to a broadening of the Mamluk court society's intellectual horizons and invigorated transregional processes of cultural exchange. This is most clearly demonstrated by Persianate literary and intellectual influences in works produced at and for the Mamluk court and with the use of Turkmen artistic forms in Mamluk book illustrations.

These observations raise the question whether members of courts outside the Mamluk realm likewise constituted the intended audiences of texts and manuscripts produced under al-Ghawrī. The fact that these art and literary works were relevant to non-Mamluk elites is attested to by the fact that shortly after their conquest of the Mamluk realms, the Ottomans took books from the Mamluk sultan's library to Istanbul. They would not have performed such a logistically demanding operation if these books were not relevant to them. Moreover, we know that the text of one of them, the Mamluk *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* was widely copied in the Ottoman Sultanate. Furthermore, it is telling that most Mamluk courtly manuscript sources used in the present study are, up to the present day, located in Istanbul—a situation that reflects their continued significance as part of the once Ottoman and now Turkish cultural and historic heritage.

However, we cannot, of course, assume that people attached to the Mamluk court produced these manuscripts in order to have them later brought to the Ottoman capital as war booty. Rather, we must ask whether there is any evidence that members of the Mamluk court used books consciously in exchanges with other courts. The *majālis* accounts include little evidence of such exchanges or of a direct connection between the presence of books during the sultan's salons and the attendance of representatives from other courts. Moreover, the fact that the most splendid late Mamluk manuscripts were written in forms of Ottoman Turkish should not mislead us to conclude that they were intended for transregional readerships, given the role that Turkic idioms played in intra-Mamluk communication, especially among the military. Furthermore, there is no evidence that books produced in the Mamluk domains and owned by the sultan were given away as diplomatic gifts under al-Ghawrī, although we know that manuscripts were used in this way in earlier periods of Mamluk history[1104] and that al-Ghawrī's reign saw particularly intensive diplomatic exchanges with multiple partners.[1105] Thus, there is, so far, little direct evidence supporting the assumption that the court production of literary works and manuscripts also targeted non-Mamluk audiences.

1104 Cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising* 32, 100, 176.

1105 Cf. section 4.1.2.3 above. See also Petry, *Protectors* 32; Petry, Institution 464; Muslu, *Ottomans* 173; based on Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* iv, 268–9.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to suggest that these cultural activities were not only intended to have an impact on al-Ghawrī's immediate courtly social environment, but also served the representational needs of the sultan vis-à-vis more remote audiences. The distance between the sultan and these audiences was, however, not spatial, but temporal. There is evidence that the sultan sponsored the production of literary works with an eye to posterity. In addition to the passage from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* discussed above, which presents Maḥmūd of Ghazna as funding the composition of the *Shāhnāme* to immortalize his name,[1106] al-Sharīf's work also includes the following piece of advice in the voice of the famous ancient Iranian vizier Buzurgmihr:

> Buzurgmihr said: "The ruler needs soldiers to take care of his dominion, viziers to take care of his rule, scholars to take care of his religion, treasuries, and storerooms to provide for those to whom he assigns [support], physicians to take care of his body, poets (*shuʿarāʾ*) to eternalize (*takhlīd*) his name, singers to let him rejoice, and eulogists (*maddāḥūn*) to raise him in rank."[1107]

Al-Sharīf included this aphorism in a part of his work labeled as a *khātima* and thus as a passage that cannot be tracked back directly to what was said and done in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. Still, al-Ghawrī knowingly or unknowingly acted according to its advice, at least with regard to the immortalization of his name through literature. We know this because the prologue of *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* states that the sultan had commissioned the translation because "the name of the people who hold command (*söz*) remains only through words (*sözile*), [yet] a person wishes for his name to remain."[1108] As we have seen,[1109] the work thus indicates that the sultan had later generations in mind when he commissioned its translation. It is reasonable to assume that the same motivation also stood behind the production of other literary works and manuscripts associated with the sultan's name.[1110]

Taken together, we see that, contrary to predominant assumptions about the limited role of Mamluk courts in the support and patronage of literary activit-

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1106   Cf. sections 3.1.1.3 and 4.2.5 above.

1107   Al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 51–2.

1108   Kültüral and Beyreli (eds.), *Şerîfî Şehnâme çevirisi* i, 10.

1109   Cf. section 4.2.5 above.

1110   On the immortalization of a ruler's name through literature, see, e.g., Meisami, *Court Poetry* 305; Meisami, Genres 237, 246; Gruendler and Marlow, Preface vi.

ies,[1111] al-Ghawrī and his court society contributed significantly to the efflorescence of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish literature in the very last decades of the sultanate. Moreover, our analysis shows that political considerations and communicative practices deeply influenced, or perhaps even triggered much of the late Mamluk courtly support for literature and the book arts.[1112] For al-Ghawrī and his court, the commission, sponsoring, collection, and performative use of literary texts and valuable manuscripts was an important means to communicate their vision of the sultan as a wealthy, well-lettered, and transregionally recognized ruler who presided over a court that was not only conversant with, but also able to contribute to the most important cultural, intellectual, and artistic projects of the early tenth/sixteenth century. Concomitantly, this support of literary and artistic activities contributed to the social cohesion of the sultan's court society, reaffirmed its shared worldview, and fulfilled important commemorative functions. Therefore, we can interpret this support of literary and artistic life that brought with it the revivification and introduction of artistic and literary practices, such as high-quality book illustrations and translations from Persian into Ottoman Turkish that had not been cultivated in late Mamluk court contexts, as another strategy through which al-Ghawrī and those around him sought to overcome the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy. Moreover, our analysis of this aspect of court culture shows that the Mamluk ruling elite under al-Ghawrī did not hesitate to embrace novel and innovative solutions to the challenges posed especially by the rise of their transregional Safawid and Ottoman rivals.

6.4 The Political Communication at al-Ghawrī's Court between Tradition and Innovation

Our analysis of political communication at al-Ghawrī's court began with the observation that al-Ghawrī's rule suffered from a crisis of legitimacy caused by both internal and external factors, including the rise of the rival polities of the Safawids and the Ottomans, the presence of the Portuguese in the Mamluk sphere of influence, recurring outbreaks of the plague, a widely perceived economic crisis, and the effects of the government's reaction to these economic

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1111 E.g., Bauer, Communication 23; Bauer, S̲h̲āʿir 719–20; Herzog, Culture 145; Talib, *Epigram* 89.

1112 On the close connection between literature, the graphic arts, and politics in the Mamluk Sultanate, see, e.g., Behrens-Abouseif, Arts of the Mamluks 13–4; Lapidus, Patronage 175–6; Holt, Biographies 27; van Steenbergen, Discourse, esp. 7–8, 12–4, 19.

developments. This crisis of legitimacy had repercussions for discursive and symbolic communication about ideal rulership and political theory at the sultan's court. This communication centered, inter alia, on exemplary rulers of the past; on mainstays of sultanic legitimacy, such as genealogy, divine ordainment, justice, and military prowess; and on the relationship between Sultan al-Ghawrī and the caliphate.

In reaction to the Mamluk crisis of legitimacy, al-Ghawrī and those around him developed and employed highly sophisticated communication strategies, as well as simpler methods, to represent and legitimate the sultan's rule and to establish and buttress a shared social reality in which the sultan was the supreme political figure. These strategies included the organization of learned *majālis*, architectural projects such as the construction of the *maydān* below the citadel of Cairo, the minting of coins featuring visual references to these projects, the staging of parades, holding of feasts, the enactment of other forms of celebrations, and finally, the sultan's support for literary activities and the book arts.

Several of our results call into question earlier claims about political culture during the late Mamluk period in general and on al-Ghawrī's reign in particular. A revision of earlier positions seems necessary, especially regarding the following five aspects: (1) the state and significance of late Mamluk political theory; (2) the allegedly distinctive secular character of political thought at al-Ghawrī's court; (3) the reasons for the seemingly irrational and wasteful splendor of late Mamluk court culture; (4) the degree to which the Mamluk court was receptive to cultural influences from outside the Mamluk realms; and (5) the inherent conservatism postulated of Mamluk political culture.

(1) Scholars interested in the development of Islamicate political thought often found the Mamluk period an unevenly rewarding field of study in which widely acclaimed luminaries such as Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Taymiyya are thought to stand out from a tradition often perceived as derivative and irrelevant to real-world politics. For instance, one distinguished founding father of the field of Mamluk studies referred to the "paucity of political writing in Mamluk Egypt and Syria"[1113] and noted that "[t]he region produced no political theoretician comparable" to the leading figures from other territories.[1114]

Taking such assessments as their point of departure, other publications ventured to more sweeping generalizations, such as the idea that the Mamluk

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1113   Haarmann, Injustice 61.
1114   Haarmann, Injustice 61.

Sultanate was "ideology free"[1115] and "[a]part from a commitment to Islam and the jihad [...] curiously bereft of any form of idealism, role models, or political programs."[1116] According to this perspective, the political writings of Mamluk authors could be judged as "sparse, sententious, and uninspiring" as well as "somewhat pusillanimous."[1117] Consequently, Mamluk politics are understood as "almost invariably driven by hunger for power, greed, arrogance, and, in some cases, fear."[1118] This line of argumentation also led to the view that it "is surprising that anyone wrote political treatises in the fifteenth century,"[1119] especially since such treatises "bore little relationship to the turbulent events around [their authors]."[1120]

The findings of the present study call for a revision of these earlier assessments. Based on texts that were hitherto often ignored in studies of late Mamluk political thought, the preceding sections demonstrated that reflections about political theory mattered greatly to members of the courtly elite, given that they invested considerable time, effort, and cultural capital in discussing these very topics. Moreover, members of the court were also willing to risk their social existence to argue for their views about how an Islamic polity should function, as is shown by Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's vehement and persistent defense of the idea that the Mamluk sultanate derived its legitimacy only from caliphal investiture. This position not only threatened Umm Abū l-Ḥasan's status as a member of the sultan's inner circle, but nearly led to his corporal punishment.[1121] Our sources also indicate that al-Ghawrī and his intimates were not indifferent to questions of political theory, such as the legal status of the caliphate vis-à-vis the sultanate, but in fact discussed them repeatedly and intensively during their meetings. One of the most important reasons for these debates was the fact that these seemingly abstract questions of political theory ostensibly mattered at the Mamluk court, whether with regard to the internal dynamics of the sultanate or its ruler's status in relation to his transregional dynastic rivals. In reaction to challenges posed by both internal and external competitors, members of al-Ghawrī's court identified political thought as a valuable instrument to legitimate the sultan's rule.

1115   Irwin, Thinking 37. The remainder of Irwin's article indicates his critical stance toward this view.
1116   Irwin, Thinking 37.
1117   Irwin, Thinking 42 (both quotations).
1118   Irwin, Thinking 37.
1119   Black, *History* 188.
1120   Black, *History* 188.
1121   Cf. section 6.2.3 above.

Moreover, late Mamluk political thought was definitely not "bereft of any form of […] role models,"[1122] given the ongoing attention that members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the sultan, paid to the examples of earlier rulers whom they saw as paragons of ideal rule.[1123] These paragons included non-Mamluk leaders, such as Alexander the Great, who represented the quintessential universal ruler, or Maḥmūd of Ghazna as an example of a Muslim leader lacking noble pedigree, and Mamluk sultans such as the widely revered Sultan Qāytbāy, who was said to have considered al-Ghawrī his rightful successor. Our results prove that Mamluk court society under al-Ghawrī considered political theory and reflections on political role models as relevant, significant, and at least potentially helpful in overcoming the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy. Moreover, our analysis underlines how important it is for scholars of Islamicate political thought to study not only mirrors-for-princes and legal treatises, but also other types of relevant sources before offering far-reaching generalizations about their subject of inquiry.

(2) Robert Irwin's examination of sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* characterized the political thought reflected therein in general as "essentially secular,"[1124] without providing a reasoned definition of this multifaceted term. Without further explanation, this characterization appears incomplete and simplistic at best, misleading and erroneous at worst. Although there can be no doubt that not every aspect of political thinking present in the accounts of the *majālis* was traced back to the Quran or the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muḥammad and his early community, categorizing it as generally "secular" in its very essence raises significant problems given the role played at al-Ghawrī's court by Islamic concepts of religious significance, such as the caliphate or the waging of *jihād*. The former concept was also particularly prominent in the texts that Irwin's study used as its most important primary sources. Moreover, in other cases, such as that of the figure of Alexander, in practical terms it is often almost impossible to decide where the Islamic tradition about the Quranic figure Dhū l-Qarnayn ends and the Persianate or Greek material about Alexander the Great begins. Hence, rather than trying to artificially separate the available material about political discussions at al-Ghawrī's court into categories such as "secular" and "religious," it appears more fruitful to follow Deborah Tor's insight, that Islamic and originally non-Islamic political notions developed over the course of Islamicate history into an "internally con-

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1122   Irwin, Thinking 37.
1123   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.
1124   Irwin, Thinking 42.

sistent, and intertwined heritage."[1125] Based on this insight, the present study seeks to situate, explain, and interpret the material at hand in the multifaceted Islamicate intellectual heritage.[1126]

This approach appears even more justified when we keep in mind that any separation of the contents of the *majālis* works into categories such as "scholarly," "religious," or "political" is only of heuristic value. The fourth and fifth chapter of the present study shows that many debates that centered on prima facie purely scholarly and religious subjects had clear implications for the representation and legitimation of political rule in al-Ghawrī's time. Operating with a strict dichotomy of "secular" vs. "religious" risks obscuring the significance of such debates for late Mamluk political life, as is demonstrated by Irwin's study which largely fails to grasp the significance of material that falls outside its "secular" category and hence pays insufficient attention to the political overtones of seemingly purely "religious" debates.

(3) In her studies of the history of the rural area of the Mamluk Sultanate that today constitutes the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Bethany J. Walker argues that the actions of the Mamluk governing authorities were "not always exploitative, violent, and rapacious. In its dealings with the people of Jordan, the Mamluk regime exhibited remarkable adaptability and rationality, adjusting to the reality of power forces."[1127] Elsewhere, Walker speaks of the Mamluk elite's "rational response[s]" to economic developments and calls into question the role of "greed"[1128] as the often assumed driving force of Mamluk policy.

Walker's emphasis on Mamluk rationality in governing agrestic Jordan tallies well with our findings about the other extreme end of the Mamluk rural-urban spectrum, that is, the ceremonial politics of the late Mamluk court in Cairo. While earlier scholarship explained courtly activities such as salons, parades, and recreational outings, as well as the sponsorship of architectural, literary, and artistic projects primarily as manifestations of the vices and moral shortcomings of the Mamluk ruling elite, the present study demonstrates that these activities constituted rational attempts by members of the sultan's court society to foster their own political, communicative, religious, social, aesthetic, and economic goals, which to a significant extent were shaped by the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy.[1129] Moreover, many of these activities were long-term pro-

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1125   Tor, Islamisation 121.
1126   Cf. section 6.2.1 above.
1127   Walker, *Jordan* 286.
1128   Walker, Responses 51 (both quotations).
1129   With regard to al-Ghawrī's fiscal and military policy, Petry already argued that the sul-

jects that required considerable time for their preparation and execution—an observation that undermines any explanation that they were the outcomes of the changing whims of the sultan and his intimates. Furthermore, in several cases, the events and actions in question were better suited to serve overarching and long-term communicative aims than to satisfy short-term emotional desires motivated by greed or love for luxury.

This is, of course, not to say that the court events staged and the architectural, literary, and artistic projects implemented were the best possible answers to the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy or any other perceived need. The actions chosen may well have been shortsighted, unbalanced, one-sided, inefficient, and informed by a less than perfect knowledge and evaluation of the situation. Moreover, they might have led to outcomes that were far from optimal. Nevertheless, they appear to have been part of a complex, conscious, and long-lasting communicative system that ensured, at least temporarily, the social cohesion of the Mamluk court, the continued elite status of its members, and the survival of the sultanate as a political entity.

It must be acknowledged that although internally consistent and in line with the available source information, this interpretation of late Mamluk court life as a series of events and actions bearing communicative significance and driven by rational considerations is nothing more than that—an interpretation. However, it offers a valuable alternative to the explanations—that have thus far predominated—of these events and actions that were often explicitly or implicitly based on the moral evaluations and judgments inherent in premodern historiographical sources in general and the chronicle of Ibn Iyās in particular, a figure whose very social and economic existence had been threatened by al-Ghawrī's—again possibly inherently rational—fiscal innovations.

(4) Older studies in particular often drew a picture of Mamluk Egypt as a self-contained "bulwark of orthodox cultural and religious conservatism,"[1130] to quote Ulrich Haarmann's synopsis of the state of research from the 1990s, which also stated: "The challenges and creative impulses which Mongol and post-Mongol turmoil brought to the artistic, literary and scholarly worlds of Eastern (Iranian, Central Asian, Anatolian) Islam never affected [...] the land of Egypt."[1131] In contrast, more recent research highlighted the manifold entan-

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tan's actions were not arbitrary, but "eminently rational" (Petry, *Protectors* 220) and were part of a "reasoned response" to a crisis (Petry, *Protectors* 2).

1130   Haarmann, Miṣr 165.

1131   Haarmann, Miṣr 165. See also Langner, *Untersuchungen* 2. On this "inwardly looking" perspective of Mamluk studies, see also Amitai and Conermann, Preface 10.

glements between the Mamluk Sultanate and its neighbors, thereby focusing primarily on diplomatic, military, and economic interconnections.[1132]

The results of the present chapter indicate that similar entanglements also existed in the domains of political thought and culture. The picture emerging from our study of political communication at al-Ghawrī's court is that of a Mamluk political culture deeply interconnected with the Islamicate world more broadly, also and especially with its eastern parts. Strategies of representation and legitimation of rule that had been developed and employed outside Egypt, such as the construction of pleasure gardens in a Persianate style or the court sponsorship of book painting were either newly introduced under al-Ghawrī or reestablished after having fallen into neglect. Moreover, discussions about rulership and political theory at al-Ghawrī's court featured distinguished historical figures, such as Maḥmūd of Ghazna, from the eastern Islamicate world and demonstrated that the Mamluk court was integrated into the broader intellectual currents of its time. This became especially apparent in our analysis of the reevaluation of the relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate and the use of caliphal titles for the Mamluk ruler that not only had parallels in other parts of the Islamicate world, but in its late Mamluk variant was only understandable against the background of broader intellectual and political developments throughout the Islamicate world. Members of the Mamluk courtly elite needed to respond to these developments in order to defend their status transregionally, and they did so with direct reference to their neighbors based in Anatolia and greater Iran.

There is truth in Irwin's observation that "Qānṣūh's court culture was a Persianate one, and it looked East for most of its role models,"[1133] although our results do not just point to a Mamluk emulation of foreign role models, as assumed, for example, by Patricia Crone who considered Mamluk court culture "invariably *imported*."[1134] Rather, the Mamluk court also actively shaped and innovatively contributed to the transregional Islamicate culture and its idioms of political communication, as shown by the "Mamlukization" of the visual program of illustrations in *Šāhnāme-yi Türkī* or the novel strategy of al-Ghawrī's physical self-identification with Alexander the Great. At the same time, our findings show that the earlier assumption that Persianate learning, literature, and art had received little attention in Arabic-speaking lands prior to the Ottoman conquest is in need of revision.[1135]

1132   For the state of the field, see Amitai and Conermann (eds.), *Sultanate*.
1133   Irwin, Thinking 42.
1134   Crone, *Slaves* 79.
1135   For this assumption, see, e.g., Berger, *Gesellschaft* 160–1; and regarding literature, see also Bauer, Anthologien 80.

Short- and long-term visitors and immigrants from Ottoman and more broadly Persianate lands such as, for instance, the translator of the *Shāhnāme*, the author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the Ottoman prince Qurqud, or the unnamed artisans responsible for the illustrations in *Şāhnāme-yi Türkī* were, it seems, decisive in helping the Mamluks participate in the transregional courtly culture of their time. As Christopher Markiewicz recently emphasized, "the movement of scholars and secretaries from one court to another" was of central importance in "the adaptation of a new vocabulary of sovereignty to ever wider political contexts"[1136] during the Islamicate late middle and early modern periods. In this context he explicitly referred to the political culture of al-Ghawrī's late Mamluk court as a case in point.[1137] Building on Markiewicz' results, we can conclude that itinerant scholars, political leaders, and artists played central roles in ensuring that the Mamluk court was not a social and cultural world apart, unaffected by intellectual and literary developments outside the sultanate, but rather a court among courts within the Islamicate ecumene, a court that was closely intertwined and interconnected with those of other Muslim rulers.

(5) The seminal work of Carl Petry demonstrated that al-Ghawrī sought to implement a highly innovative reconfiguration of Mamluk military and fiscal policy in order to cope with the political, economic, and security challenges of his time.[1138] While Petry's findings and his interpretation of al-Ghawrī's fiscal and military policy as novel are widely accepted today,[1139] scholars continue to opine that in other contexts, the late Mamluk elite remained deeply committed to preserving the status quo, also and especially in terms of foreign policy. Petry's own work argues that "Mamlūk foreign policy aimed, as its primary objective, at preserving stasis,"[1140] with "[n]ew ideologies of relations between states, expansive visions of imperialism, or experiments with new styles of diplomacy [finding] minimal receptivity. The climate for their adoption remained ambivalent if not hostile."[1141] The Mamluks as a "self-focused elite"[1142] were thus characterized by a "conservative stance"[1143] and "lacked the capacity, or the

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1136   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 151 (both quotations). On travelers between the Mamluk and the Ottoman realms, see now Muslu, Patterns.

1137   Markiewicz, *Crisis* 110, 184–5.

1138   Cf. section 2.2.1 above for Petry's work.

1139   Winter, Review 161, is one of the few critical voices regarding Petry's conclusions about al-Ghawrī's innovativeness. See also Daisuke, *Tenure* 83–4, 96, 106–7, 148, 174–6, 214–5.

1140   Petry, *Protectors* 31.

1141   Petry, *Protectors* 35. See also Petry, Institution 465.

1142   Petry, Innovations 441. See also Petry, Institution 463.

1143   Petry, War 109. See also Petry, Robing 353; Petry, Innovations 441–2; Petry, Institution 462.

inclination, to devise tactics aimed at embracing sweeping change."[1144] According to Petry's analysis, for members of the Mamluk elite—including explicitly Sultan al-Ghawrī—the way they were trained and educated "caused them to look backward, rather than to see the world in ways that lay outside of the narrow conventions they understood. That they clung to such conventions in an era of sweeping realignment boded ill for the capacity of their region to adapt […]."[1145]

Based in part on Petry's work, Albrecht Fuess's publications identified Mamluk conservatism as one of the reasons for the downfalls of the sultanate, especially vis-à-vis the rising Ottoman polity that had an "advantage in innovation" (*Innovationsvorsprung*)[1146] over the Mamluks. Following Ulrich Haarmann's work, which argued that Mamluk political thought was marked by a "petrified conservatism"[1147] and postulated that the Mamluk system was no longer able to implement reforms in the late middle period, a study by Fuess concluded that "the Mamluks were simply not prepared to be able to react flexibly to the challenges of the age of discoveries"[1148] and therefore ultimately lost the struggle against their Ottoman and Safawid rivals.[1149]

These statements do not fit well with our findings about Mamluk political communication under al-Ghawrī, which was inherently connected to Mamluk foreign policy. Instead of a "petrified conservatism"[1150] as postulated by Haarmann's work, the accounts of al-Ghawrī's debates demonstrate the development and existence of highly innovative concepts in Mamluk political thought, such as a full merger of the caliphate and the sultanate, or a non-violent reconfiguration of the notion of *jihād*. As we saw, the Mamluk court developed these innovative approaches in dialogue with transregional interlocutors. Hence, the received knowledge about Mamluk political conservatism is in need of revision, at least with regard to the very late Mamluk period.

Without doubt, the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court stood in a tradition dating back centuries, if not millennia, and included many elements that earlier inhabitants of Egypt would easily have recognized. Al-Ghawrī staged parades on the very same route that many of his Mamluk predecessors had used, in an effort to reaffirm his rule vis-à-vis large audiences and reestablish

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1144   Petry, *Protectors* 61.
1145   Petry, War 109.
1146   Fuess, Dreikampf 249.
1147   Haarmann, Injustice 62.
1148   Fuess, Dreikampf 249.
1149   Fuess, Dreikampf 249.
1150   Haarmann, Injustice 62.

the social cohesion of his court society. Moreover, he renovated or rebuilt struc-tures constructed by earlier Mamluk sultans, thus reaffirming his place in a long-lasting tradition of rulership. The accounts of his *majālis* formed part of a time-honored literary genre and can be understood as conscious references to ʿAbbasid court life. Moreover, they included numerous references to revered rulers of the past who figured as predecessors, role models, points of refer-ence, and alter-egos of the Mamluk ruler. Furthermore, the central place held by the concept of justice in political communication at al-Ghawrī's court was not only in line with earlier Mamluk political discourse, but also came to be manifested in social practices, such as the public hearing of legal cases, that al-Ghawrī's predecessors had likewise used to legitimate their rule. Similarly, the use of dreams said to have heralded al-Ghawrī's ascension to the sultanate as a means of political legitimation had parallels in earlier periods of Mamluk and Islamicate history. Finally, the great significance of high-ranking members of the military in court communication under al-Ghawrī also aligns with what we know about earlier phases of the history of the sultanate. Hence, it is clear that many key elements of the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court constituted part of the time-honored Mamluk heritage.

Yet, it is equally obvious that some of the most prominent features of the political culture of al-Ghawrī's court were innovative and unusual, at least in a late Mamluk context. In addition to the new strategies of fiscal and military organization meticulously analyzed by Petry, the sultan and those around him used his salons—which, according to present knowledge, were unique events in the Mamluk period with regard to their level of literary documentation—to communicate a novel vision of late Mamluk rule. Central building blocks of this vision included genealogies that linked the Circassian Mamluk rulers to the Prophet Joseph's family or, building on earlier models, to ancient Arabian nobil-ity. In turn, these genealogies were supplemented by attempts to negate the importance of a ruler's *nasab* outright, a reinterpretation of *jihād* that focused on scholarly pursuits instead of military actions, a recasting of the sultan into the cosmic figure of the *ṣāḥib qirān*, and a revision of Islamic political thought that opened the way for a complete merger of the sultanate and the caliphate, both de jure and de facto.

This novel vision of Mamluk political rule was not limited to the sultan's *majālis*. It was also reflected in other cultural and political activities at court, such as the Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Shāhnāme* which not only stands out as the rendering of a Persian text into versified Ottoman Turkish in an Arabic-speaking environment, but is also remarkable for its scale and its political overtones. Likewise, al-Ghawrī's sponsorship of the production of a richly illustrated copy of this translation, while not uncommon in the political

culture of the Islamicate world of his time, was a highly unusual strategy to display sultanic wealth and refinement in the Mamluk context.

The sultan's engagement in architectural projects fulfilled similar functions. These included the construction of an innovatively designed *maydān* that not only served as a military training facility, a place of litigation, a religious space, and a manifestation of the sultan's affluence, but also housed a Persianate pleasure garden. Moreover, there is evidence that the sultan identified and utilized the minting of copper coins as a way to spread knowledge about his construction projects among his subjects. Finally, al-Ghawrī employed novel means of performative self-representation and self-legitimation by donning headgear that visually transformed him into the figure of Dhū l-Qarnayn and by updating the design of the sultan's parasol, one of the central symbols of Mamluk rule.

As argued above, this novel vision of sultanic rule and the communicative strategies devised to convey it constituted, to a significant degree, responses to the late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy caused, inter alia, by changes in transregional political contexts. Hence, late Mamluk political culture was evidently not inherently static, conservative, unresponsive to change, and resistant to novel or foreign political concepts and strategies. Rather, the picture of the Mamluk Sultanate and especially its courtly elite under al-Ghawrī that emerges from our findings is one of an adaptive, dynamic, culturally open, and steadily developing social body that was deeply embedded in and entangled with the larger Islamicate world of its time. This holds true although Mamluk political rule under al-Ghawrī matches very closely Weber's concept of traditional authority, with little pointing to aspects of legal or charismatic authority.

These insights, while calling into question earlier research results about late Mamluk political culture as discussed above, resonate well with the findings of other recent studies such Amina Elbendary's observation that the late Mamluk period "witnessed a real transformation in the shape of the Mamluk state, in the ways in which the Mamluks exercised and wielded power over the populations, and in the ways in which they controlled and managed state resources."[1151] Similarily, Bethany Walker ended her study of Mamluk Jordan with the résumé that "the Mamluk regime appears surprisingly flexible and able, and willing, to transform itself"[1152]—a conclusion that also fits the findings of the present chapter.

1151   Elbendary, *Crowds* 22.
1152   Walker, *Jordan* 288.

Conclusion

7.1 Summary

In spite of the undisputed importance of the term "court" to denote political, social, cultural, economic, religious, and scholarly centers in premodern Islamicate history, thus far, scholars in this field have paid only limited attention to its proper conceptualization as an analytical category. In part this is because, unlike their European equivalents, Islamicate courts were rarely the subject of specialized studies. Those publications that focus on Islamicate courts often select examples from the so-called "Golden Age" of Islam as exclusive objects of inquiry. Later courts, including those of the Mamluk rulers of Egypt and Syria, attracted very little scholarly attention, as their time period, according to a narrative once widespread in the field, was understood as marked by a large-scale intellectual, cultural, and social decline and thus of only very limited interest. While recent publications have largely deconstructed this decline narrative, current scholarship continues to embrace one of its central elements, namely the assumption that courts of the late middle period had ceased to function as centers of intellectual and literary life to the extent that they became culturally irrelevant. This notion of the irrelevance of courts has discouraged in-depth studies of courts of the late middle period, and continues to risk uncritically reproducing biases inherent in the Islamicate historiographical literature of the period.

Addressing these research gaps and preconceptions, the study at hand represents the first book-length analysis of key aspects of Mamkuk court culture. It argues that the late Mamluk court functioned as a pivotal center of intellectual, literary, religious, and political culture in its time and thus, was far from "irrelevant." The study furthermore develops a theoretical understanding of the concept of "court" that not only builds on state-of-the-art sociological and historical research on courts in other periods and regions, but also demonstrates its analytical value in the study of premodern Islamicate societies through a detailed examination of one pertinent example. Moreover, the present study is the first to exploit and interpret a large corpus of previously understudied and in part newly discovered primary sources that lead to deep insights into the life of the court of the penultimate Mamluk ruler Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 906–22/1501–16). The core of this corpus consists of three texts, including eyewitness accounts of the *majālis* that Sultan al-Ghawrī convened at the Cairo

Citadel, where he discussed a broad array of scholarly, religious, and political questions with members of his court, including scholars, civilian officeholders, and foreign guests. Based on these sources and building on theoretical work on court life in and beyond the Islamicate world, the study addresses these four research questions.

I.   How can we conceptualize the court in the context of late Mamluk history?

II.   In what ways was the Mamluk court involved in learned activities and the transmission of knowledge during al-Ghawrī's reign?

III.   What roles did the Mamluk court play with regard to religious thought and practice?

IV.   What concepts of rulership existed at al-Ghawrī's court and how did they inform the courtly representation and legitimation of rule in the late Mamluk period?

The first chapter tackles the first research question and develops the theoretical understanding of the term "court" used throughout the historical analysis. Based on an analysis of premodern Arabic vocabulary for various aspects of what is signified by the English term "court," it argues that while the terminology for courtly spaces, people, and events is remarkably rich, diverse, and multifaceted, there is no premodern Arabic word that brings together all the meanings of the English term "court." This finding underlines the need for a proper conceptualization of the term "court," as the term does not correspond to any one term in premodern Arabic texts.

While Norbert Elias' sociological work on the French court of the eleventh/seventeenth to early twelfth/eighteenth century is often heavily criticized today, it still offers several important points of reference for reflections on what constitutes a ruler's court. These include Elias' focus on the "court society" as a social body characterized by competition, his attention to otherwise often neglected aspects of court life such as etiquette and ceremonial, his understanding of the role of a court's conspicuous consumption, and his interpretation of distinct court cultures as strategies through which members of court societies sought to maintain their status. Later approaches to the study of courts, including the work of Ronald G. Asch, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, and Felix Konrad often build on these findings. Research by these scholars highlights the importance of occasions such as audiences, receptions, investitures, banquets, festivities, and processions for the existence of courts and argues that indeed, a court only comes into being through such events. Hence, it is possible to define a court not as an institution such as a royal household, but rather as a "series of occasions"[1] that are performed by, in the presence of, or on behalf of a ruler.

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1 Asch, *Hof* 13.

The events constituting the court are understood as bearing communicative significance. Rulers use their courts to communicate, express, represent, and legitimate their supreme position vis-à-vis multiple audiences, including their subjects and other courts. Hence, courtly events can be analyzed as acts of verbal and/or non-verbal communication. Communication is thereby seen as always operating in certain sets of social conventions and rules that are reaffirmed through acts of communication. Accordingly, acts of communication continuously (re-)produce social reality while performatively expressing and confirming group identities. This applies to both symbolic and discursive acts of communication. While the former create meaning of a higher order, allude to shared cultural concepts, and are of a momentous and inherently ambiguous character, the latter are characterized by a clear internal structure, an effort to minimize ambiguity, and often high levels of complexity and abstraction. In the context of premodern courts, ceremonies and rituals as standardized sequences of acts of symbolic communication play a particularly prominent role in representing, expressing, shaping, and maintaining social orders. Special attention needs to be accorded to the spaces where such acts of communication take place, given that spaces not only bear symbolic meaning in themselves, but can also be reconfigured by means of symbolic communication through which they acquire courtly qualities. This explains why courts are sometimes perceived as spatial entities.

For the study of premodern courts, the concept of representation as a communicative process of symbolic expression and visualization of differences in status (that in themselves are imperceptible) is of central importance. Moreover, this concept is helpful for understanding the reasons rulers and the elites around them employed specific forms of communication often associated with luxury and conspicuous consumption. They did this in order to maintain and (re-)produce their distinct social positions, and thereby create identities of their own and reaffirm the values and norms sustaining them.

The analytical potential of this approach can be greatly augmented by combining it with a second perspective focusing on the social dimension of what constitutes a court. According to this second view, which again builds on Asch's work, the court constitutes a social entity made up of the people who habitually participate in the courtly events of communicative significance discussed above and thereby gain access to the ruler. The social body of the court that Elias referred to as "court society" is differentiated from the ruler's household as an institution and can be imagined as a series of fluid concentric circles around the ruler, with the members of the innermost circle having the most frequent and direct access to the head of the court.

Court societies are characterized by high levels of internal competition for economic, cultural, and social capital, with patronage constituting a central

mechanism for the exchange and allocation of these different forms of capital. The closely related concept of favoritism refers to the existence of one or several members of a given court society who enjoy a particularly high level of favor with the ruler, are often connected to the latter through ties of friendship, and have special prerogatives not linked to a specific office.

The Arabic term *majlis* (pl. *majālis*), which basically means "a place where one sits" and is often best translated as "session" is particularly significant for the study of the performative, social, and spatial dimensions of Islamicate court life. As courtly events, *majālis* typically had a social and scholarly character and followed a specific protocol. Following Lale Behzadi, we are justified in translating the term *majlis* in this specific context with the English word "salon," given that Islamicate courtly *majālis* shared numerous features with European salons.

The second chapter provides an overview of the historical context and the state of research on al-Ghawrī's reign. It begins with an introduction to the life and work of Muḥammad Ibn Iyās (d. after 928/1522), the only Egyptian chronicler who left a detailed account of this period of Mamluk history. The relationship between Ibn Iyās and al-Ghawrī was characterized by significant conflict and tension, as a consequence of the sultan's decision to strip descendants of the military elite, including Ibn Iyās, of the tax grants (sg. *iqtāʿ*) that often constituted the basis of the latter's livelihood. This resulted in the chronicler's biased portrayal of al-Ghawrī as an unjust ruler.

Ibn Iyās' chronicle *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* is an extremely detailed source on the political, administrative, economic, military, social, cultural, literary, religious, medical, and natural history of the Mamluk Sultanate in general and Cairo in particular, especially in the sections covering the author's lifetime. However, because Ibn Iyās was not a member of the Mamluk court, his accounts of Mamluk court life are often less detailed and somewhat sketchy. His chronicle is thus rather ill-suited to provide information on the internal life of the sultan's court society. Nevertheless, in modern scholarship, Ibn Iyās' account of al-Ghawrī's reign became the standard narrative on this period of Mamluk history. Therefore, it serves as the basis for the present study's summary of the history of al-Ghawrī's tenure up to his death in 922/1516 in battle against the Ottomans. Following Ibn Iyās, the overview pays special attention to al-Ghawrī's controversial fiscal, economic, and military policies on the one hand, and Mamluk involvement in transregional conflicts on the other hand.

Ibn Iyās' priorities with regard to al-Ghawrī's reign also shaped modern scholarship, which consists largely of paraphrases and summaries of Ibn Iyās' chronicle. Consequently, many studies address questions raised by a perusal of *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, questions that are often impossible to answer based solely on

Ibn Iyās' chronicle and on the very limited number of other easily available his-
toriographical sources. Whenever new and additional source evidence beyond
the historiographical sources commonly consulted has been examined, this has
led to significant and novel insights into the history of the Mamluk Sultanate
under al-Ghawrī's reign. This is best exemplified by Carl Petry's seminal work
on late Mamluk endowment deeds and related documents. As Petry showed,
these documents indicate that al-Ghawrī, together with an apparently small
circle of aides, sought to implement innovative fiscal and military measures in
response to the multifaceted crisis that the sultanate faced in his time.

Besides scholarship on the political and economic history of the Mamluk
Sultanate, a sizable number of publications address cultural and religious life
under al-Ghawrī. Studies from these fields often focus on individual objects of
art or specific texts, including two of the three accounts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*
that formed the subject of several essayistic and often unsystematic works
of limited scope. These studies on late Mamluk cultural and religious history
provide evidence that al-Ghawrī's court was a remarkably favorable climate for
religious expression, literature, and the arts. Yet, publications on Mamluk court
culture in general are almost nonexistent. Thus far, only the spatial dimension
of Mamluk court life at the Cairo Citadel has received a critical modicum of
attention.

Moreover, the two scholarly discourses on the late Mamluk period that focus,
on the one hand, on political and economic questions and, on the other hand,
on cultural and religious issues, have hitherto often remained distinct and,
indeed, even unrelated to each other. As a result, our knowledge of the late
Mamluk period suffers from an insufficient dialogue between disciplines. Addi-
tionally, in studies of al-Ghawrī's reign, the problem of an often one-sided
and uncritical reliance on Ibn Iyās' chronicle persists, while research on the
accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* is still in its infancy, despite their value as
important sources on late Mamluk history. Furthermore, so far, Mamluk studies
have failed to fully utilize the analytical value of the theoretical concept of the
court. The study at hand addresses these problems and lacunae by providing a
theoretically grounded analysis of al-Ghawrī's court that builds on a systematic
scrutiny of the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, uses Ibn Iyās' chronicle along-
side other sources, and sheds equal light on intellectual, religious, and political
topics.

The third chapter introduces the source material of the present study, begin-
ning with the three Arabic accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. The first of these
accounts, *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār al-Qurʾāniyya*, is pre-
served in a unique, lavishly produced manuscript that was originally intended
for al-Ghawrī's library. Like the manuscripts of the two other main sources, it

was later taken to Istanbul. Parts of the text were edited in Cairo in 1941 by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām; however, this edition is fraught with problems and leaves out about one-half of the text without properly indicating its substantial omissions. Consequently, the present study relies primarily on the unique manuscript of the text and not—as all other recent studies of the *majālis*—on ʿAzzām's incomplete edition.

Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya consists of an introductory section providing information on the relationship between its author and Sultan al-Ghawrī, a main part comprising the accounts of close to one hundred individual *majālis* divided along chronological criteria into ten chapters, and a concluding section asking for al-Ghawrī's forgiveness. Together with some circumstantial details, the account of a typical *majlis* consists of a series of questions and answers about one or two overarching topics. At times, riddles and various kinds of prose narratives feature as well. A *majlis* account usually ends with two concluding sections added by the author to the proceedings of the session.

The text identifies its author as Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, known as al-Sharīf, who also features as a participant and first-person narrator in the account of the *majālis*. Al-Sharīf, who was a native speaker of Persian or a Turkic language, probably hailed from the former territories of the Qarā Qoyunlu and in Cairo entered into a patronage relationship with al-Ghawrī that was, however, later endangered when al-Sharīf incurred the sultan's wrath during the *majālis*. Al-Sharīf wrote *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* apparently in an attempt to regain the sultan's favor and demonstrate his value as a client rich in cultural capital.

Al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masāʾil al-Ghawrī constitutes the second account of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* analyzed. It survives in a unique manuscript that bears a reading note by ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna who served as Ḥanafī chief judge under al-Ghawrī. ʿAzzām produced a partial edition of the text which, however, only includes about one-quarter of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and again does not properly identify its numerous omissions.

The text of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* currently available in manuscript form represents only a part of the entire work as originally conceived by its author, who apparently planned a text of at least two volumes, of which only the first is known to be extant. Following a short introduction explaining that the content represents a selection of the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, the main part of the text is composed of a series of questions and answers that lacks any overarching subdivisions.

The work does not contain the name of its author. Based on internal evidence, it appears that its author was a native Arabic speaker who most probably belonged to the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, attended al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, and was a

member of the sultan's court society. *Al-Kawkab al-durrī* was written because its author sought to establish and maintain patronage relationships with the Mamluk ruler and, it seems, the Ḥanafī chief judge Ibn al-Shiḥna. Circumstantial evidence indicates that the author might have been a certain Shaykh ʿAbbās, mentioned elsewhere as an instructor of *mamlūk*s. For the time being, however, it is not possible to establish this identification beyond doubt.

The third main source, *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ghawriyya*, is preserved in a two-volume manuscript that exhibits numerous codicological similarities to the manuscript of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and was produced by the same scribe. There is no edition of this text, which until now has been almost entirely ignored by scholarship.

The first volume of the text includes an introduction; a brief question-and-answer section; a long main part dealing with the history of humankind up to the early third/ninth century, including associated entertaining and edifying literary material; and a short final passage. The second volume features a short introduction, including a question-and-answer section; thereafter, it continues the historical account up to the early days of Sultan al-Ghawrī's reign, also incorporating related material. The introduction of the first volume indicates that the work was based on the proceedings of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* and was intended to include significantly more than the contents of the two volumes known today.

The text does not provide any explicit information on the identity of its author. Together with several textual and codicological similarities between *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, information that can be gleaned from the work suggests that *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were written by the same author or, at least were not composed independently from each other.

Their thematic breadth, structure, context of origin, later history, literary character, and the reasons they were written indicate that all three main sources belong to the genre of courtly *majālis* works. The decision to produce texts on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* in this genre, which had flowered in ʿAbbasid and Buyid times, suggests that their authors consciously situated their works in an earlier tradition of courtly literature. Concomitantly, the works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* exhibit similarities to other genres of Arabic literary culture often associated with the concept of *adab*; these genres include encyclopedias, anthologies, literary offerings, *munāẓara*s, and *maqāma*s.

The three main sources are not minutes of the *majālis*, but rather constitute literary texts intended, inter alia, to praise the sultan and to represent and legitimate his rule. Nevertheless, they may serve as historical sources on al-Ghawrī's *majālis* provided their literary characteristics are properly taken into account.

Their value as historical sources is confirmed by the history of interpretation of these texts and the peculiarities of their genre. Furthermore, internal evidence, such as the presence of textual elements that stand in conflict with the fundamental goals of the texts, speaks for their reliability as historical sources. Most importantly, a comparison between information included in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* on the one hand and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* on the other hand demonstrates the presence of numerous passages that are very similar in content, but notably different in wording. This allows us to conclude that the three texts represent two mutually independent traditions of writing about al-Ghawrī's *majālis*—traditions that narrate the same events from different angles, thereby confirming each other. Finally, there is external evidence that corroborates information found in the *majālis* accounts. This evidence comes from other late Mamluk sources, but also from texts produced in other political contexts and from the natural sciences.

Other sources utilized in the present study include Arabic chronicles and other types of historiographical writings that often focus on regions under Mamluk suzerainty outside Egypt. These, inter alia, help us to understand how late Mamluk rule and court life were perceived beyond the capital of Cairo.

Arabic literary offerings and related works represent another body of relevant source material. They bear witness to multiple discourses on ideal rulership and sultanic representation extant in the cultural context of Islamicate courts of the early tenth/sixteenth century and contain information on the intellectual life of al-Ghawrī's court and the history of his reign more broadly. This study relies, moreover, on four mirrors-for-princes that were produced for al-Ghawrī or his library and constitute valuable sources for the study of political thought at his court.

Three chancery manuals provide further information on topics such as the Mamluk sultan's household, military and civilian offices of the administration, courtly events, the political theory of the sultanate, and the titles and forms of address employed by the Mamluk chancery. As a documentary source, the main endowment deed of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex offers, in particular in its introduction, noteworthy information on late Mamluk concepts of rulership and al-Ghawrī's religious status that so far has largely escaped scholarly attention. The last type of Arabic source utilized is a corpus of poems that can be attributed to al-Ghawrī; it provides information about the ruler's religious thought and scholarly competence.

In addition to these Arabic texts, the study relies on sources in Turkic and several European languages. The former comprise a body of poems written by al-Ghawrī that are evidence that at least some members of the Mamluk court had knowledge of Ottoman Turkish literature. The Ottoman Turkish transla-

tion of the Persian *Shāhnāme* and other translated texts offer valuable information on intellectual and artistic activities at al-Ghawrī's court and its integration into the contemporaneous transregional Islamicate court culture. Chronicles and chancery works written in the Ottoman realm help us understand Mamluk-Ottoman relations. Travelogues and related texts written in European languages are important because their foreign authors recorded many observations that local writers considered too trivial to write about. They thus offer additional unique insights into everyday Mamluk life, also in a courtly context.

The last type of evidence utilized in the present study comes from material and epigraphic sources such as manuscripts as physical objects, coins, architectural structures and inscriptions on buildings, and works of art. These types of sources add to our knowledge of educational practices at the late Mamluk court, the political and religious culture of the time, the spatial context of courtly events, and al-Ghawrī's support for architecture and the fine arts.

The fourth chapter focuses on learning and the transmission of knowledge at al-Ghawrī's court and especially on the role of the *majālis* in the intellectual and scholarly life of the court. It scrutinizes when and where these events took place, analyzes their etiquette, and shows that the *majālis* constituted courtly events and ceremonies as defined in the first chapter. Following a regular schedule and convened in spaces that were highly charged with symbolic meaning, the *majālis* included actions of symbolic significance and fulfilled, inter alia, representative and legitimating functions for the sultan.

The participants in these events belonged to the inner circles of al-Ghawrī's court society and were all Muslims. They can be subdivided, for heuristic purposes, into four categories: the host; local participants such as Mamluk scholars and officeholders; guests including foreign leaders, envoys, and itinerant scholars; and marginal figures. We know from al-Ghawrī's intellectual biography that the scholarly character of the *majālis* matched his personal interests. This also helps explain why the sultan appears in the *majālis* accounts not only as the host, organizer, and highest-ranking member of his salons, but also as a very active participant, although we must keep in mind that the authors of our sources had a vested interest in presenting al-Ghawrī as a learned ruler.

Mamluk scholars and officeholders who entertained patronage relationships with the sultan and competed with each other for posts, status, and influence figured quite prominently among the attendees of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*. For famous scholars, participation in the *majālis* offered opportunities to intensify their patronage relations with the ruler and rise to the status of his favorite, although such close proximity to the sultan always entailed the risk of sudden downfall. For lower ranking and less renowned scholars, the *majālis* could be an important social venue to attract the sultan's attention and benefit from his

patronage. While theoretically, similar opportunities were also open to leading government officials, holders of such posts do not play an important role in the accounts of the salons, an observation that further emphasizes their scholarly character.

Foreign guests attending al-Ghawrī's *majālis* often held high political offices, as is clear from the presence of an envoy from a Muslim-ruled Indian polity and the Ottoman prince Qurqud, who shared al-Ghawrī's intellectual interests and, upon the sultan's invitation, participated in multiple salon meetings. This was apparently part of al-Ghawrī's strategy to secure Qurqud's goodwill in case the latter succeeded to the Ottoman sultanate. After Qurqud died in the succession struggle with his brother Selīm, al-Ghawrī's earlier association with Qurqud apparently influenced Selīm's hostile attitude toward the Mamluks.

Marginal figures such as musicians, servants, *mamlūk*s, and jesters also played important roles in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, although our sources often provide very little information about these people. The presence of *mamlūk* recruits is noteworthy, as the salons were otherwise attended almost exclusively by civilians. While musicians generally remain unnamed in our sources, one famous musician who was among al-Ghawrī's long-term clients is identified by name as Muḥammad b. Qijiq. Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, a liminal figure of ambiguous gender identity, functioned as a court jester and in this capacity was able to express critical points of view that other members of the court did not dare to voice.

Regarding the discussion topics of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, a quantitative analysis of the contents of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* shows that *fiqh* questions clearly predominated and accounted for about one-third of the subject matters of these works, with *tafsīr* ranking a clear second, with an average share of about one-fourth. Each of the fields of *ʿaqīda* and *kalām*, various types of literature, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, *ḥadīth* and *sīra*, and finally *tārīkh* reach average values of 5–10 percent. *Ḥikma* in its various forms accounts for just 1 percent of the contents of the works, with 3–4 percent belonging to miscellaneous other fields of knowledge.

A detailed analysis of examples of debates from each of these fields shows that the learned discussions of al-Ghawrī's salons tackled questions that were of great concern to leading contemporaneous scholars and members of the ruling elite. Deeply embedded in the scholarly culture of their time, with its characteristic professionalization, cosmopolitanism, overabundant wealth of information, and blurring of borders between religious scholars and litterateurs, the *majālis* attendees took up contested and up-to-date questions, replied to them in conversation with state-of-the-art scholarly works and more specialized texts, and contributed to ongoing learned debates. Concomitantly,

the *majālis* functioned as sources of information and venues for knowledge exchange and transmission for their members. Moreover, some of their discussions were decidedly entertaining and contributed to the sultan's amusement and that of his court society. Finally, these events also helped to communicate the image of al-Ghawrī as a witty, clever, well-lettered, virtuous, pious, and therefore legitimate ruler who presided over a cultivated and highly accomplished court society. This society comprised some of the leading scholarly figures of its time and participated in the same cultural tradition as other, both earlier and contemporaneous learned Islamicate courts where similar topics were studied and comparable forms of literature blossomed. Hence, the *majālis* stand side-by-side with other courtly educational activities such as the recitation—and at least partial commentary—of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* at the Cairo Citadel or the production and collection of books at court.

The fifth chapter deals with the religious life of al-Ghawrī's court. It addresses the most important religious events, beginning with the Friday prayer as a recurring ceremony that affirmed the religious identity of its participants, bore political significance through the mentioning of the ruler's name, and contributed to bringing the sultan's court, as a series of occasions, into being. All high-profile members of the court, including the sultan, were expected to attend the Friday prayer at the citadel where courtly hierarchies were reaffirmed through the spatial arrangement of the congregation, the existence of a separate sultanic prayer space in a prominent location, and the staging of a parade before and after every Friday prayer.

The lavish courtly festivities on the occasion of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday served similar functions and also incorporated parts of the sultan's court society that were absent from more frequent religious events. The celebration of this holiday at the Cairo Citadel highlighted its political significance and provided an opportunity to endow this courtly space with a distinct religious quality. During the event, the sultan presented himself as the generous, pious, and religiously legitimate head of an internally stratified, socially cohesive, and evidently pious court society. These messages were reinforced on the same occasion by ceremonies of homage to the ruler and the latter's participation in Sufi practices. In contrast, the observance of ʿĀshūrāʾ was not a major courtly event, but nevertheless allowed the sultan to dramatize his generosity through almsgiving.

There is no evidence that local Shiʿis, Christians, or Jews played any relevant roles in the life of al-Ghawrī's court, many of whose members identified with a remarkably pro-ʿAlid form of Sunni Islam. Moreover, members of several Sufi groups, including the recently immigrated Khalwatiyya order, significantly influenced the religious atmosphere at court. Sufi thought and practices had

such an impact on courtly events and texts that at times the sultan styled himself as a Sufi and engaged in Sufi behavior, thereby seeking to reap both religious and political benefits, while concomitantly affirming the acceptability of contested religious practices.

Debates about religious subjects constituted another prominent aspect of the religious life of al-Ghawrī's court. Topics included eschatological matters that were discussed against the background of the Quran, prophetic traditions, and theological teachings. In eschatological discussions, members of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* not only displayed their acumen, erudition, and familiarity with important scholarly works, but also demonstrated their willingness to accept conflicting interpretations of religious tenets, as long as these did not affect the fundamentals of Sunni Islam.

God's attributes and the concept of faith constituted a second major topic of religious debates that primarily addressed the conflicting opinions that the Māturīdiyya and the Ashʿariyya, the two dominant Sunni theological schools of the late middle period, held on these subjects. It appears that al-Ghawrī's court society was well informed about and deeply concerned by these doctrinal differences that posed a threat to religious peace in the Mamluk realm. Consequently, members of the court sought to develop theological compromises that would be acceptable to both schools. They thereby anticipated similar developments in the Ottoman period and exhibited a level of courtly interest in theological matters hitherto considered highly unusual in the late middle period.

In the communicative context of his court, al-Ghawrī used a broad array of strategies to present and legitimate himself as an outstanding religious figure of cosmic significance. Among other aspects, the sultan sought to be recognized as a protector of religion and morals by curbing behavior among his subjects that was perceived as being contrary to the prophetic *sunna* and calling for religiously mandated actions such as the performance of the ritual prayers. Similarly, the sultan sought to demonstrate that as a pious, generous, and legitimate ruler, he was interested in promoting the religious life of his subjects by renovating or building religious, educational, and charitable structures such as his funeral complex and by ensuring the security of the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Guardianship over these cities figured prominently in al-Ghawrī's claims for religious legitimacy and he defended it vehemently against Muslim rivals, local insurgents, and Portuguese invaders. Moreover, al-Ghawrī also cast himself in the role of a religious scholar by having himself addressed as such, producing poetry, participating actively in his *majālis*, and patronizing literature to immortalize these events. The pinnacle of al-Ghawrī's aspirations to exalted religious status, however, involved the claim that he was sent by God

as the promised renewer (*mujaddid*) of his time. Through these assertions, al-Ghawrī arguably hoped to reach a level of religious legitimacy that would not only set him apart from all internal rivals, but also put him on a par with his transregional adversaries, while at the same time enabling him to remain firmly in the religious cosmos of Sunni Islam as understood by his Mamluk contemporaries.

The sixth chapter analyzes concepts and practices of rulership, representation, and legitimation of rule at al-Ghawrī's court. It argues that Mamluk rule suffered at the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century from a crisis of legitimacy. Lacking noble pedigree and Muslim origin, as did many of his predecessors, al-Ghawrī's position was threatened by internal problems including the rapid change of rulers before his ascension to the sultanate, his initially weak position vis-à-vis the Mamluk military elite, troop mutinies, the economic contraction the sultanate experienced during his reign, and his responses to the economic situation. To this, we must add the external challenges posed by Portuguese military activities in the Mamluk sphere of influence and rival claims to supreme political status in the Islamicate world raised by Ottomans and Safawids.

To remedy this situation, the sultan and his court engaged in intense discursive and symbolic self-legitimating communication. Among other elements, they sought to establish connections between al-Ghawrī and exemplary rulers of the past such as Alexander the Great or Dhū l-Qarnayn (lit., the one with the two horns), as he was known among Muslims. Al-Ghawrī and Alexander, who represented universal rulership par excellence, were not only linked through textual practices, but also sartorially, by means of a headgear with two horns that the sultan donned for courtly events. The sultan's second figure of reference, Maḥmūd of Ghazna, was primarily regarded as a model of decidedly Muslim rulership who, like al-Ghawrī, lacked a noble genealogy. Al-Ghawrī's former master and indirect predecessor Qāytbāy, the third paragon of ideal rulership in our sources, is portrayed as having heralded his *mamlūk*'s future ascension to supreme office.

Members of al-Ghawrī's court also reconceptualized select mainstays of sultanic rule in order to legitimate the sultan's position. On one hand they disputed the importance of genealogical legitimation, but on the other hand they presented two conflicting genealogies that traced al-Ghawrī's origins back to either the Prophet Joseph's brothers or to members of the ancient Arabian tribal group of the Ghassanids. Thereby, they provided the sultan with precisely the kind of noble pedigree that his transregional rivals criticized him for lacking. Moreover, people associated with the sultan's court presented al-Ghawrī's rule as divinely ordained and as having been predicted through dreams and astrological computations. The Mamluk ruler was, moreover, identified as a

ṣāḥib qirān—an astrological title that was particularly prominent in political communication during the late middle and early modern periods throughout most of the Islamicate world. The fact that this title appears in our sources indicates Mamluk participation in these transregional Islamicate political discourses.

Our sources also bear witness to multiple literary and performative efforts to demonstrate that al-Ghawrī possessed the central political virtue of justice. Texts written under the sultan's reign affirmed the centrality of justice from various perspectives, including theological, philosophical, legal, literary, and ethical viewpoints. Building inscriptions and architectural structures conveyed to large audiences an image of the sultan as exceptionally just and countered accusations of tyrannical behavior current at least among some of his subjects. Furthermore, some court texts extolled al-Ghawrī's merits as a *mujāhid*, but there is also evidence that the *jihād* concept was reinterpreted and identified with scholarly, rather than military, efforts. This reconceptualization might have been informed by al-Ghawrī's apparently very limited interest and engagement in fighting.

Members of al-Ghawrī's court also reinterpreted the time-honored Islamic political concept of the caliphate. Several pre- and early Mamluk authors of political treaties held that under certain circumstances, a worldly ruler not related to the Prophet Muḥammad could legally take over caliphal prerogatives. Nevertheless, for most of the history of the sultanate, Mamluk rulers relied on the legitimating effect of a formal investiture by a nominal ʿAbbasid caliph residing in Cairo. However, members of al-Ghawrī's court advocated reconceptualizations of the relationship between the caliphate and the sultanate that were unprecedented in the Mamluk context and justified the sultan's complete appropriation of caliphal rights *and* titles. While the details of their arguments were not uniform, members of al-Ghawrī's court reasoned that the caliphate in its traditional form had either ceased to exist a long time ago, or that al-Ghawrī was the rightful holder of this office in his time. In particular, they opined that al-Ghawrī's supreme political status derived not from his investiture with the sultanate by a member of the ʿAbbasid dynasty, but was merited and justified in its own right. In doing so, they also called into question the legitimacy of the ʿAbbasids of Cairo. This development was, according to our current knowledge, singular in Mamluk political thought and did not pass uncontested among al-Ghawrī's court society. However, at least some members of the court evidently perceived this innovation in political thought as another promising strategy to overcome the Mamluk crisis of legitimation. Concomitantly, it constituted a reaction to the actions of rival rulers such as the Ottoman sultans who likewise claimed caliphal status.

Among the communicative strategies that al-Ghawrī and his court society employed to represent and legitimate the sultan's rule, his *majālis* played an important role not only for the attendees, but also vis-à-vis larger segments of the population, as general knowledge about these events is attested to by authors who were not affiliated to the court in any way. Their level of information sufficed to indicate that by meeting scholars and other learned members of his court, the sultan fulfilled an important requirement of ideal rulership as prescribed by contemporaneous political theory.

Likewise, the sultan's manifold non-religious construction projects served purposes of representation and legitimation, as demonstrated by the example of the *maydān* below the Cairo Citadel. This park-like structure combined the functions of a military training ground, a place in which to hear legal cases, a religious space, and a Persianate pleasure garden used for ceremonial and ritual purposes. By building and using this liminal space between the citadel and the city of Cairo for various courtly events, the sultan presented himself to domestic and transregional audiences as a militarily powerful, approachable, just, pious, resourceful, generous, and cultivated ruler who was conversant with and immersed in transregional traditions of court life current in the wider Islamicate world of his time. Moreover, a survey of copper coinage issued under al-Ghawrī suggests that the sultan and his court society used coins of low intrinsic value, which circulated widely, as a medium of communication to convey the notion of the sultan as a great sponsor of architectural projects.

Furthermore, parades, feasts, and other courtly celebrations played a pivotal role for the representation and legitimation of al-Ghawrī's rule, also and especially in times of crisis, as exemplified by the period of political upheaval caused by al-Ghawrī's prolonged eye disease. Immediately after his recovery, the sultan organized a month of extended feasting and elaborate courtly events to reconstitute his court society, vis-à-vis multiple audiences through performative means, as a cohesive and internally stratified social body and to reaffirm his supreme position as its head and ruler of the realm. Moreover, the sultan and his court also utilized literary production and the cultivation of, particularly Persianate, book art traditions as strategies of representation and legitimation of rule. Support of these activities by members of al-Ghawrī's court was an efficient strategy to display and commemorate their wealth, largesse, erudition, and active participation in the transregional Islamicate courtly culture of their time.

Based on these findings, we may conclude that contrary to claims raised by earlier studies, political thought did matter in the communicative context of al-Ghawrī's court and was by no means exclusively backward-looking or inherently secular in origin, rather it resulted in highly innovative approaches

while incorporating fundamentally Islamic concepts such as *jihād* and the caliphate. Moreover, rational reasons, and not character flaws, as suggested in previous publications, can be identified as guiding motives behind the seemingly wasteful aspects of late Mamluk court life. Furthermore, contrary to positions found in earlier scholarship, late Mamluk political culture under al-Ghawrī was highly receptive to foreign influences and able to adapt to new circumstances. Thus, this culture cannot be described as conservative and unaffected by developments in other, especially eastern regions of the Islamicate world.

7.2 Research Results and Outlook

The present study demonstrates the profound value of the analytical category of "court" for generating insights about learning, religion, and rulership in premodern Islamicate societies. It conceptualizes a ruler's court as a series of events held in specific spaces and bearing communicative significance on the one hand and as a social body of people who usually participate in these events and thus gain access to the ruler on the other hand. Through its analysis of the example of Sultan al-Ghawrī's court, the study shows that this conceptualization is not only meaningful and appropriate in Islamicate contexts, but also enables scholars to implement theoretically grounded and fruitful analyses of practices and strategies employed by premodern Islamicate rulers and the elites around them. By asking who communicated through specific court events, what meaning was communicated, and to which audiences, the approach exemplified here constitutes a methodologically sound and at the same time productive way of looking beyond the interpretations offered in our sources and in some of the secondary literature, which often sees court ceremonial simply as a waste of resources by a morally depraved court elite satisfying its lust for luxury. Moreover, the approach applied in the study at hand also opens the way to a deeper understanding of concepts, practices, worldviews, and social realities that are created, expressed, shaped, maintained, and reconfigured by means of symbolic communication, a type of communication whose far-reaching importance and vital functions in premodern Islamicate society remains only very imperfectly understood.

At the same time, the present study points to several ways in which this theoretical approach can be further refined to serve as a more powerful instrument in the analysis of Islamicate societies. First, inquiries into the scholarly communication at al-Ghawrī's court underline the great importance of non-symbolic, discursive forms of communication in premodern Islamicate courts for the

shared projects of intellectual inquiry, creation of meaning, and construction of social reality. This finding suggests that instead of focusing exclusively on symbolic communication, scholars applying approaches based on communication theory to the study of premodern courts must not neglect discursive communication as (at times) at least an equally important form of message exchange among members of courts. Moreover, a focus on this type of communication is a necessary precondition for a more advanced understanding of the role of Islamicate courts in scholarship, theological debates, and the transmission of knowledge, topics that, in light of the results of the present study, promise to offer worthwhile opportunities for future research.

Second, future analyses of symbolic communication in courtly contexts should pay particular attention to communicative practices associated with the cultural system of religion, also and especially in predominantly Muslim contexts. Our results show that acts of religious communication were a constitutive feature of al-Ghawrī's court and that their functions went far beyond the basic aspect of establishing contact with the divine. The observation that religious practices also served, or arguably even primarily served social and political functions should not mislead us to conclude that they were no longer of religious relevance, but calls for a proper conceptualization of religious communication in the greater framework of verbal and non-verbal uses of widely shared cultural symbols.

Third, our study highlights the dependency of communication-centered historical analyses on the focuses of their sources. In the case of al-Ghawrī's court, the almost exclusive emphasis of our main sources on the person of the sultan posed considerable challenges for a fuller analysis of courtly social relationships and communicative connections beyond the ruler's immediate sphere of direct interaction.[2] Possible strategies to overcome this problem include relying on a broad array of different sources, including texts written by people belonging to other cultural or linguistic backgrounds, and various types of non-textual evidence. Furthermore, scholars using communication-centered approaches to study premodern courts should pay special attention to practices of exchange and social interaction that did not involve rulers directly and hence might be only indirectly discernible in the available source material.

Fourth, the results of our application of the approach outlined above emphasize that any attempt at a holistic study of court life must take the spatiality of communication into proper account. Human communication never takes place outside spaces, but is deeply involved in and shaped by the con-

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2 For a similar observation from medieval European history, see Althoff, Einleitung 3, 11.

struction, use, reconfiguration, and modification of its spatial contexts. While a simplistic interpretation that sees a ruler's court as identical to a given space, such as a palace, appears ill-suited for a comprehensive understanding of premodern court life, a focus on social relations and events of communicative significance must not lead to a methodological blindness that means we miss the pivotal importance of space.

Fifth, our results point to the central role of the materiality of communication in the study of premodern courts. For both symbolic and discursive practices of communication, the production, use, handling, display, exchange, translocation, and at times even destruction of objects were of key importance and they made it possible for members of the court to convey comprehensible messages, also and especially in transregional practices of communication. Given the text-based character of much of the historical work on premodern societies, the materiality of these texts and their carriers deserves particular attention in studies of court culture.

Based on the theoretical foundations already outlined, our analysis of late Mamluk court life under Sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī points to a florescence of learned, religious, and political communication amidst a period of marked economic contraction, demographic decrease, and challenges to Mamluk rule. The Mamluk court functioned as a hub of scholarly communication where members of different social groups including the Mamluk ruler, leading local *ʿulamāʾ*, and foreign visitors engaged in lively discussions about some of the most important and pressing scholarly questions of their time. Many of these discussions were also religiously significant and underlined the Mamluk court's role as a center of religious learning, in addition to its function as a major locus of religious practices. Both discursive and performative aspects of courtly religious life had a bearing on Sultan al-Ghawrī's status and supported his efforts to endow his rule with religious legitimacy. Hence, the religious activities of the court were closely connected to late Mamluk political culture. In particular, they were among the many strategies used to legitimate and represent the sultan's status against the background of centuries-old traditions of Islamicate political thought on the one hand and of the contemporaneous challenges to Mamluk rule on the other hand.

We can only fully understand this florescence of Mamluk court life and the concomitant challenges of Mamluk rule and economic well-being when we perceive the sultanate as deeply embedded in and interconnected with the world around it, both in the Islamicate ecumene and beyond. Members of al-Ghawrī's court built on their advanced knowledge of the scholarly, literary, religious, and political heritage of the Islamicate world to find innovative and unprecedented solutions to contemporaneous threats to Mamluk rule. These

solutions targeted not only the rather narrow circle of the courtly elite, including the sultan, but also the Mamluk population at large as well as key audiences of other Islamicate courts. In devising these replies to current challenges, members of the sultan's court not only reshaped and reinterpreted earlier scholarly, religious, and political concepts and practices, but also overcame linguistic, geographical, and cultural boundaries that previous scholarship presented as largely insurmountable, because Mamluk society was mistaken as being inherently conservative and self-contained.[3]

These conclusions about the interconnected and innovative character of late Mamluk court life under al-Ghawrī apply to all three aspects of court culture studied, that is, scholarship, religion, and political communication. Contrary to an earlier superficial assessment, our results about the scholarly and educational activities of al-Ghawrī's court in general and the sultan's *majālis* in particular do not point to a "diminishment in [...] erudition"[4] in late Mamluk court life. Rather, they attest to the court's participation in scholarly activities that were closely connected to Mamluk intellectual, religious, and literary life more broadly and built explicitly and consciously on the work of earlier generations of scholars and writers, with the learned courtly culture of the ʿAbbasid period constituting an especially important point of reference. Yet, scholarly and literary activities at al-Ghawrī's court were not limited to simple reiterations and emulations of earlier intellectual perspectives and practices. Bringing together learned men of different status, cultural backgrounds, and geographical origins, the sultan's court in general and his *majālis* in particular offered a social venue that allowed its members to make meaningful and sometimes novel contributions to learned debates that were important for Islamicate intellectual life of the late middle and early modern periods, both in the Mamluk realm and beyond. The intellectual and worldview-building projects to which the members of the *majālis* contributed were by no means parochial and provincial, but of a decidedly transregional and cosmopolitan character. This is clear from references to authorities and scholarly works from outside the Mamluk lands, as well as from the presence of foreign scholars, envoys, and political leaders who were steeped, in particular, in Persianate literature and scholarship. Their active participation often had a profound and formative influence on the learned debates of al-Ghawrī's court.[5] Thus, the research results of the

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3 See also, briefly, Mauder and Markiewicz, Source 148.

4 Irwin, *Night* 443.

5 This contradicts, e.g., the assumption in Berger, *Gesellschaft* 164–5, that an "inner-Islamic cultural cosmopolitanism [...] is new in Ottoman times."

present study demonstrate that Mamluk learned life was, in its courtly mani-
festations, inherently cosmopolitan.

Similarly, our results on the religious dimension of court life show that the
sultan and those around him, while embedded in the religious tradition of
Sunni Islam, welcomed newcomers and employed novel religious practices,
new theological concepts, and innovative claims for religious status when this
helped to achieve their goals, be these communicative, salvational, or political
in nature. Examples of this include the ways in which members of the court
celebrated religious holidays such as the *mawlid* of the Prophet, their open-
ness toward the recently immigrated Persianate Sufi order of the Khalwatiyya
with its distinct religious practices, their attempts to harmonize Māturīdī and
Ashʿarī religious teachings, their integration of pro-ʿAlid notions into a Sunni
worldview, and their efforts to cast the sultan into the role of a *mujaddid* of his
time. Furthermore, the sultan's court society accepted a certain level of plur-
ality in religious outlook, while striving for compromise and harmonization
when it perceived religious differences as threatening the peace of the realm
at large.

One of the most fundamental driving forces behind the blossoming of late
Mamluk court culture under al-Ghawrī was the crisis of legitimacy which Mam-
luk rule suffered as a consequence of both internal and external developments.
This crisis led to a profound interest in diverse aspects of political theory,
including notions of ideal rulership and role models of virtuous leadership
that members of al-Ghawrī's court perceived as meaningful in dealing with
their troublesome situation. Against the same background, they reinterpreted
key elements of Mamluk political culture such as the relationship between
the caliphate and the sultanate and reconfigured ceremonial communicative
practices that had often remained largely unaltered during the first two and
one-half centuries of Mamluk rule. Members of al-Ghawrī's court also vig-
orously continued or reestablished time-honored Mamluk forms of political
communication that they perceived to be still meaningful and significant, thus
signaling that they stood in a broader tradition of Mamluk representation and
legitimation of rule. Concomitantly, many of the more innovative features of
political communication under al-Ghawrī bore witness to the Mamluks' open-
ness toward transregionally diffused conceptions of rule and strategies of its
legitimation that were often of a Persianate background. Indeed, if one takes
Abbas Amanat's recent work on the distinctive features or, as he refers to them,
the "modalities" of the Persianate world as a benchmark, one could argue that
Mamluk court culture under al-Ghawrī was to a significant extent Persianate in
character, given that its members not only participated in Persianate traditions
of political thought and performance, but that they also immersed themselves

in key works of Persian literature,[6] such as the *Shāhnāme*, embraced forms of Sufism such as the Khalwatiyya that developed in the Islamciate East, and iden-tified with Persianate traditions of material culture, as visible, for example, in their patronage of architecture and the book arts. Thus, they partook in all four of Amanat's fundamental "Persianate modalities."[7] These findings stand in con-trast to earlier assumptions that Persianate cultural forms were seldom taken up in the pre-Ottoman Arab world.[8]

There is evidence that, at least in the eyes of some contemporaries, the attempts of al-Ghawrī and his court society to legitimate the sultan's rule through recourse to Persianate and other cultural practices found a modicum of success. Ibn Iyās, writing shortly after the sultan's demise and possibly influenced by his negative experiences with the new Ottoman rulers, paints a remarkably positive picture of al-Ghawrī's rule:

> What [al-Ghawrī] said was carried out, and he commanded immense respect. *Amīr*s, governors, and soldiers were under his thumb,[9] and no one engaged in controversy with him until he and the Ottoman Selīm Shāh, the ruler of Anatolia became estranged from each other and [al-Ghawrī] went [to meet] him. Then, this great catastrophe overtook him, [the like of] which had not happened to any [other] ruler of Egypt, nor to any other ruler.[10]

> In sum, Sultan al-Ghawrī was the best of the Circassian rulers, despite his crookedness (*ʿalā ʿawj fīhi*), and after him came no ruler who was his like in deeds, nor in the loftiness of his high-mindedness, and the strength of purpose in his orders. He was fully qualified for the sultanate and vener-ated for his parades, which were a pleasure to the eyes.[11]

The fact that in his final positive assessment Ibn Iyās prominently mentions the sultan's courtly events suggests that al-Ghawrī's communicative strategies,

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6   On this point, see in detail also Mauder, Persian 389–91.
7   Amanat, Remembering 29–50. According to Amanat, Remembering 20, speaking Persian was not a necessary requirement for being part of the Persianate world. On the Per-sianate and especially Timurid character of Islamicate court culture of the period, see also Markiewicz, *Crisis*, esp. 5, 151, 285.
8   E.g., Berger, *Gesellschaft* 160–1, 164.
9   Literally, "were in the grip of his hand."
10   Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 88.
11   Literally, "filled the eyes up completely." Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ* v, 95.

which aimed at legitimation through the representation and dramatization of his political status, had a positive effect on al-Ghawrī's image. This is especially noteworthy in the case of Ibn Iyās, given that the chronicler had firsthand knowledge that the sultan financed such events by alienating funds intended for the support of the subject population.

The conscious reconceptualization, reinterpretation, and further development of inherited traditions under al-Ghawrī and the sultan's heavy investment in strategies of political communication and representation make it understandable that Shemuel Tamari and others described al-Ghawrī's reign as a "renaissance"[12]—a term that, while not used in the present study because of its Eurocentric connotations, constitutes a noteworthy counterpoint to the widespread notion of a cultural "decline" in the late middle period.

The concept of "decline" has long dominated modern scholarship on the Islamicate middle and early modern periods in general and the late Mamluk period in particular, with many scholars arguing that the alleged "decline" of the Islamicate world was both general and irreversible, and that it affected the economy as well as politics, scholarship, learning, and culture in a broad sense.[13] More recent research shows that the concept of "decline" is ill-suited as a descriptive and analytical basis for a meta-narrative of Islamicate history, regardless of whether the discussion concerns the Islamicate ecumene in its entirety or the late Mamluk Sultanate specifically. It seems clear that during the late Mamluk period Egypt and Syria underwent a series of marked economic changes that many of those affected perceived as symptoms of crisis. However, recent research, published mainly during the 2010s, demonstrates that approaches based on categories such as "transformation" and "adaption" offer significantly more analytical potential than the earlier, decline-centered perspective for understanding the consequences of these developments.[14] Likewise, in the realm of political history in a narrow sense, scholars have begun to perceive the late Mamluk period and especially the ninth/fifteenth century

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12   Tamari, Inscription 175. See also section 2.2.2 above.

13   For overviews of the impact of the decline paradigm and its history with a focus on the Mamluk period, see, e.g., van Steenbergen, Wing, and D'hulster, Mamlukization 1, 550–1; Irwin, Eyes 47–9. See also section 2.2.1 above. Classical formulations of the decline paradigm are included, e.g., in Ashtor, *History* 301–31; Ashtor, Decline; Ayalon, Some Remarks.

14   For recent discussions of the economic development, see, e.g., Lev, History 472–9, 484–7; Walker, *Jordan*, esp. 284–5; Elbendary, *Crowds*, esp. 1–2, 7–17, 22, 203–4; Apéllaniz, *Pouvoir, passim*. On the usefulness of the concept of transformation, see Bauer, *Mittelalter* 113.

no longer as a time of decline, demise, or chaos, but rather as defined by adaptations and transformations that were part of a multifaceted process of state formation.[15]

Numerous recent publications on manifold aspects of Islamicate scholarly, religious, literary, and cultural history have also shown that "decline" cannot and does not constitute a meaningful category for the analysis of developments in these fields.[16] Undoubtedly, the study of scholarship, religion, and literature in the late middle period is still in its very early stages and much ground work remains to be done[17]—a fact attested to also by the present study, which is not only based to considerable degree on unedited sources, but also tackled several basic issues concerning the character of these texts and their historical context before proceeding to questions with more far-reaching implications. However, once such basic questions are dealt with and the next analytical steps can be taken, the Islamicate middle period often turns out to be surprisingly rich in examples of scholarly development, literary ingenuity, religious transformation, and cultural florescence. The vast majority of detailed analyses of Islamicate intellectual and cultural life during the late middle period published in the 2000s and 2010s, whether in the realms of literature,[18] including poetry,[19] historiography,[20] philosophy,[21] the natural sciences,[22] *kalām*,[23] law,[24] Quranic

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15   Van Steenbergen, Wing, and D'hulster, Mamlukization [both parts].

16   For examples of earlier studies from these fields influenced by the decline paradigm, see Abdel-Meguid, Survey 111–2; Irwin, *Night* 315, 447–8; Allen, Period 1–2, 6–7; Black, *History* 58, 186–7; Geoffroy, al-Suyūṭī 914; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 85–6; Langner, *Untersuchungen* 1–3, 14.

17   Pfeiffer, Introduction 2. See also Eichner, *Tradition* 501; and for the situation in literary history, see also Kilpatrick, Decadence 71; van Berkel, Opening 361; Bauer, Literature 105. On the fact that the decline paradigm resulted in a lack of scholarship on Arabic literature from the late middle period, see Marzolph, Knowledge 407–8; Bauer, Literature 105–7; and on post-ninth/fifteenth-century intellectual history, see El-Rouayheb, Gate 263–4, 274–7; El-Rouayheb, *History* 1–2, 202.

18   E.g., al-Musawi, *Republic*, esp. 5, 11, 13, 308–9; Bauer, Anthologien 110; Bauer, Literature, *passim*; van Berkel, Opening 362.

19   Homerin, Reflections, esp. 63–4, 71.

20   Weintritt, *Formen* 11–2, 20. See also von Hees, Meaning.

21   Griffel, Kommentar, in Ibn Rushd, *Abhandlung* 62, 70; El-Rouayheb, *Syllogisms* 2–3, 9. See also Griffel, *Theology* 3–6; Griffel, Killing; Brentjes, Prison 131.

22   Fancy, *Science* 1–6, 115.

23   Spevack, Egypt 534; Würtz, *Theologie* 4–5; Eichner, *Tradition* vii, 5, 140, 145–6, 333; Wisnovsky, Avicennism 351.

24   Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 181–3; Saba, *Harmonizing* 1, 3–5, 25; Al-Azem, *Rule-Formulation*, *passim*.

exegesis,[25] Sufism,[26] modes of scholarly exchange in various disciplines,[27] or cultures of book use and reading,[28] show that the history of this period is much too multifaceted and complex to be adequately covered by a sweeping generalization of widespread decline. Similarly, characteristics of the intellectual culture of the late middle and early modern periods that were previously perceived as signs of decline, such as the boom in the writing of commentaries and compendia, are now seen as important intellectual practices in their own right that could contribute to dynamic processes of learning and knowledge production.[29]

In light of these findings, there is good reason to entirely discard the "decline" concept from the study of Islamicate history. In a recent article, Sonja Brentjes exposes the concept of "decline" not only as overly simplistic and deeply entangled with cyclical theories of historical inquiry no longer in use, but also as highly judgmental and emotionally charged.[30] Often applied to time spans that cover many centuries, the "decline" concept is used for such sweeping generalizations that Brentjes speaks of its "temporal absurdity."[31] Tracing the history of the concept back to European discourses of the sixteenth century CE, Brentjes shows that it is "deeply value-laden"[32] and closely connected to early modern European political and religious expansionist projects. As part of a tradition of "intellectual colonialism,"[33] its continued use is not justifiable.[34]

While recent scholarship on the history of the Islamicate world during the middle and early modern periods thus thoroughly dismantled the concept

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25   Saleh, Gloss, *passim*.

26   Hofer, *Popularisation* 252.

27   Pfeifer, Encounter 220.

28   Hirschler, *Word*, esp. 3, 124–5.

29   E.g., al-Musawi, *Republic* 97–103, 109–12 (on commentaries and compendia); Fancy, *Science* 114–5; Hallaq, *Sharīʿa* 182–3; Saleh, Gloss 248–9; Spevack, Egypt 543–4; Subtelny and Khalidov, Curriculum 225; Blecher, *Said* 18, 30; Wisnovsky, Nature 151–2, 156; Wisnovsky, Avicennism 350–1; Hathaway, *Lands* 132–3; Özervarlı, Theology 573; Al-Azem, *Rule-Formulation*, *passim*; El-Rouayheb, *History* 2–3, 33–4, 71, 122–4, 134; Goudarzi, Books 282; El Shamsy, Law 301–2 (all on commentaries); Gardiner, Encyclopedism 11; von Hees, Encyclopaedia 185–6 (on compendia).

30   Brentjes, Prison 135. See also Bauer, Literature 106.

31   Brentjes, Prison 136 (direct quotation), 136–7 (argument). See also Brentjes, Prison 154.

32   Brentjes, Prison 137.

33   Brentjes, Prison 138. See also Bauer, Literature 105, 107.

34   Brentjes, Prison 137–8. See also Brentjes, Prison 151–4; Bauer, Literature 105–7; Bauer, Search 141–4; Bauer, *Mittelalter* 106–10.

of decline[35] together with its colonial motivations that until the present day inform perceptions of the Islamicate world as "culturally backward," even authors who significantly contributed to this paradigm shift continue to embrace one of the last major building blocks of the decline narrative that has remained almost completely unchallenged: the assumption that the courts of the often non-Arab rulers of the late middle and early modern periods had ceased functioning as centers of intellectual, cultural, and political life. Thus, recent publications claim that "[i]n the Mamluk empire, the principal nexus of intellectual and literary exchanges shifted away from the court"[36] and that "the Mamlūk and Ottoman courts no longer offered the resources for a vivid literary culture in Arabic."[37] Other studies go one step further and claim that the highly competitive "open market culture economy"[38] of literary and intellectual life of the late middle period flourished "in the relative absence of the court"[39] to such a degree that "the ruler's court ha[d] no function here."[40] The most recent pertinent study published in 2018 states that in Mamluk literary life "courts […] diminished in importance to the point of irrelevance."[41]

The study from which the last quotation originates points to the main problem inherent in these assumptions when it notes, directly after postulating the "irrelevance" of courts, that "[l]iterary salons (*majālis*, sg. *majlis*) were undoubtedly important, but the history of their role in literary culture is only beginning to be written."[42] As this statement suggests, the far-reaching general evaluations about the cultural role of Mamluk courts just quoted are made against the background of a hitherto almost complete absence of specialized studies on Mamluk courtly *majālis* culture. Instead, they reflect the biases of Arabic-speaking authors who, in an effort to secure their own social position, did their best to downplay, if not completely deny the depth, sophistication, and richness of cultural life at the courts of their mostly foreign overlords.[43]

The results of the present study, which constitutes the first in-depth analysis of Mamluk court culture, pave the way for a revision of assumptions about a

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35   However, on the continued significance of the decline paradigm, see von Hees, Paradigm 7. For a survey of modern Arabic works on decline, see Dziekan, Period 95–104.

36   Muhanna, Century 352. See also Muhanna, *World* 20.

37   Bauer, Shā'ir 720. See also Bauer, Communication 23.

38   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 127.

39   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 263.

40   Al-Musawi, *Republic* 127. See also al-Musawi, *Republic* 81, 248.

41   Talib, *Epigram* 89. Cf. section 3.1.4 above for further relevant literature.

42   Talib, *Epigram* 89–90.

43   Haarmann, Arabic 81–4. See also Keegan, Review 252; Berkey, Culture and Society 392.

"decline of court patronage"[44] resulting in the "irrelevance"[45] of courts. What we know about court life under al-Ghawrī shows that courts in the late middle period in general and in the Mamluk Sultanate in particular could and indeed did matter as centers of political, cultural, intellectual, and—albeit often multilingual and thus in part non-Arabic—literary life.[46] There can be no doubt that the florescence of Mamluk literary and intellectual life beyond elite court circles that the quoted studies primarily focus on was important and widespread. However, this florescence of non-courtly literary and intellectual life cannot be explained by unproven and oversimplified assumptions that Mamluk court circles no longer played important roles as patrons, recipients, and originators of intellectual and literary achievements. Instead, it remains an important desideratum to examine whether and how Mamluk court and non-court spheres of intellectual, religious, literary, and cultural activity existed side by side and to scrutinize the, as the present study suggests, manifold interconnections between them in the communicative construction of a shared social reality. Moreover, we must explore how the patterns of patronage at court evolved in tandem with the social conditions and contexts of Mamluk scholarship and literature, with its trends of professionalization, cosmopolitanism, the oversupply of information, and the blurred differences between scholars and litterateurs. Such a focus on Mamluk courts in dialogue with their broader cultural, intellectual, and literary contexts also appears to be necessary to overcome limitations in the present state of knowledge—limitations that leave the role of courts in the Islamicate middle period poorly understood, not only with regard to scholarly and literary life, but also in the religious realm and in the development of political thought.

Our findings on al-Ghawrī's court demonstrate that even in periods widely perceived as characterized by severe economic crisis and military competition between rival political centers, courts could undergo periods of marked cultural florescence. This observation, which is paralleled by findings on court life in other historical and geographical circumstances,[47] also confirms that

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44   Herzog, Culture 145.

45   Talib, *Epigram* 89.

46   For similar conclusions, see van Steenbergen, Discourse, esp. 3: "[S]uch a marginalization of political elites and interests from current understandings of Mamluk literary culture is increasingly difficult to maintain"; and briefly, Keegan, Review 252. Brentjes, Prison 145–9, explicitly points to continued courtly patronage of the sciences after the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century.

47   With regard to Timurid history, Subtelny, *Circles* 2–3, notes "a general stepping-up of cultural, primarily literary, production" as a consequence of "political fragmentation [...] [and] the proliferation of rival courts" (Subtelny, *Circles* 2, both quotations) and draws

the communicative activities of al-Ghawrī's court in fields such as scholarship, religion, and political culture were not a pale residue of former glory, but a conscious attempt to respond to the challenges faced by the sultan's late Mamluk court society.

The degree to which the florescence of Mamluk court culture under al-Ghawrī was typical for its period and region is a worthwhile topic for future inquiry. It bears reiteration that members of al-Ghawrī's court, including the sultan, regarded his former master Qāytbāy as a model of ideal rulership. Given that Sultan Qāytbāy wrote religious poetry[48] and actively supported the arts and architecture,[49] applying research questions similar to those of the present study to Qāytbāy's court appears particularly promising. Moreover, we know that al-Ghawrī was not the only sultan to convene *majālis*; earlier Mamluk rulers and dignitaries also held them as venues for entertaining and edifying exchanges, although apparently none of these were commemorated in works similar, in scope and detail, to the accounts of al-Ghawrī's salons.[50] Nevertheless, comparative studies of these events against the background of what we know about al-Ghawrī's *majālis* could open valuable insights into scholarly practices that were not centered on and did not take place in endowed educational complexes, such as *madrasa*s, and have thus far largely escaped the attention of scholars of Mamluk intellectual culture. It will only be possible to assess the general importance of Mamluk courts for the intellectual, religious, and literary culture of the sultanate during its more than 250 years of existence and arrive at broad conclusions about the historical development of the role of Islamicate courts of the late middle period in these fields once such studies are conducted. Without doubt, comparative *longue durée* perspectives, in which our knowledge about Mamluk court *majālis* is seen in context with findings about similar ʿAbbasid, Fatimid, or Ottoman events,[51] could offer rich analyt-

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a comparison to the "Renaissance courts of Italy" and "the phenomenon of the small German courts in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century" (Subtelny, *Circles* 3, both quotations). For similar observations, see Kraemer, *Humanism* vii; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty* 31; Naaman, *Literature* 1; Black, *History* 57; Peacock and Yıldız, Literature 20; Hirschler, *Damascus* 28; Vale, *Court* 10; Binbaş, *Networks* 4. For a theoretically grounded approach to this issue, see Ewert, Tausch 71.

48   See section 3.2.7 above.

49   See section 6.3.2 above.

50   On these *majālis*, see Mazor, *Rise* 183; Flemming, Activities 250; ʿAṭā, *Majālis al-shūrā* 236–8; Larkin, Poetry 221; Irwin, Literature 27–8; Irwin, Mamlūks 502; Irwin, Thinking 40; Levanoni, Supplementary Source 173. On learned meetings held by Sultan Jaqmaq, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm* xv, 199–200; al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbāʾ* 178.

51   On Ottoman parallels, see, e.g., Hanna, Life 197, 201–2; Pfeifer, Encounter.

ical potential in this regard. Likewise, a broad synchronic approach examining similarities and interconnections with courts from other parts of the Islamicate and non-Islamicate world promises to yield noteworthy results.

Such broader studies that explore macro-historical questions, however, must not lose sight of the people who, with their specific experiences, backgrounds, and agendas, shaped the intellectual, religious, and political life at pre- and early modern courts. We know that the character and cultural atmosphere of courts could stand and fall especially with the interests, personalities, and outlooks of their leading figures.[52] Without Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī's innovativeness and adaptability, as documented by earlier scholarship on the sultan's fiscal and military policy and as encountered repeatedly in the realms of learning, religion, and rulership, the late Mamluk court of the early tenth/sixteenth century most likely would have looked profoundly different. Similarly, the openness of the sultan and his court society to transregional exchanges, especially with the Persianate world, had a formative impact on the cultural life of his court, which already struck contemporaneous observers as remarkably receptive to external influences. While these findings caution against the premature application of our research results to other Mamluk courts,[53] they bear witness to one of the most central features of courts as a series of events and social entities, namely, they are fundamentally fluid and continuously changing. This insight was already known to the Welsh nobleman Walter Map, with whose observations we began this study and with which we also bring it to its conclusion:

> *Scio tamen quod curia non est tempus; temporalis quidem est, mutabilis et uaria, localis et erratica, nunquam in eodem statu permanens. In recessu meo totam agnosco, in reditu nichil aut modicum inuenio quod dereliquerim.*

> I know, however, that the court is not time, but it is temporal, mutable and manifold, local and vagrant, never remaining in the same state. When I leave it, it is entirely familiar to me, when I return, I find nothing or little of what I have left.[54]

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52 Schlieben, *Macht* 117; Bumke, *Kultur* ii, 640; Grebner, Einleitung 9; Fried, Netzen 153. For Islamicate *majālis*, see, specifically, von Grunebaum, Aspects 293; Naaman, *Literature* 282. See also more critically Markiewicz, *Crisis* 13–4.

53 On the applicability and transfer of insights about one Islamicate court to others, see van Berkel et al., Conclusion 217.

54 Map, *De Nugis* 2.

Works Cited in the Accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*

The following list includes all quotations in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* from written works whose sources could be conclusively identified. It includes clearly recognizable paraphrased quotations, but excludes cases in which a work is mentioned or referred to, but no specific quotation could be tracked down. Citations from the Quran and *ḥadīth* collections are not included. The list is ordered chronologically according to the author's date of death. Each entry includes the name and death date of the author, the reference of the quotation in the works on al-Ghawrī's *majālis*, a short description of the content, and the identification of the quotation in the source text.

1) **Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767)**
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 63: on the exegesis of Q 46:35
Tafsīr iv, 207

2) **(Pseudo-)Abū Ḥanīfa, Nuʿmān b. Thābit (d. 150/767)**
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 124; (ed. ʿAzzām) 37: on the createdness of human actions and knowledge
Waṣīyat al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān 45

3) **al-Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/923)**
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 23–4: on the exegesis of Q 97:3
Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl al-Qurʾān xxx, 167

4) **al-Ashʿarī, Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl (d. 324/935)**
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 124–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 37–8: on the createdness of faith
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Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar i, 228–9

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8)   al-Baghawī, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd (d. 516/1122)

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9)   al-Ṭurṭūshī, Muḥammad b. al-Walīd (d. 520/1126 or 525/1131)

a)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 90ᵛ–93ʳ: on Ibrāhīm b. Adham al-Balkhī

     Sirāj al-Mulūk 69–71

b)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 31ᵛ–32ʳ: on Niẓām al-Mulk and the right spending

     of the ruler's money

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10)   al-Zamakhsharī, Jār Allāh Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar (d. 538/1144)

a)   al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 138: on the exegesis of Q 12:98

     al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl ii, 504

b)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 62: on the exegesis of Q 46:35

     al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl iv, 313

c)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 97: on the exegesis of Q 18:82

     al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl ii, 742

d)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 102: on the exegesis of Q 5:55

     al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl i, 649

e)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 110: on the exegesis of Q 27:23

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g)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 221–2: on the exegesis of Q 27:17–8

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11)   al-Maʿarrī, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān (d. 557/1162)

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     al-Hidāya i, 374–5, 377

b)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 112: on oaths
     al-Hidāya iv, 18

c)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 113: on oaths
     al-Hidāya iv, 19

d)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 113–4: on oaths
     al-Hidāya iv, 20

e)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 146–7: on the five types of homicide
     al-Hidāya viii, 3–11

f)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 192: on oaths
     al-Hidāya iv, 50

g)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 80–1: on places where the Friday prayer is held
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13)   **al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar (d. 606/1209)**

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16)   **al-Qurṭubī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr (d. 671/1273)**

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b)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (ms) 112: on ʿAlī b. Ḥamza al-Kisāʾī
        Wafayāt al-aʿyān ii, 296

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d)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 61ʳ: on ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān
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e)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 61ʳ: on the killing of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib
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f)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 75ᵛ–76ʳ: on Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik
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g)   Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 86ᵛ: on Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr
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20) al-Kisāʾī (fl. fifth/eleventh century?)

a) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 8ᵛ: on the Prophet Adam's death
    Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ 143

b) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 8ᵛ–10ʳ: on the Prophet Idrīs
    Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ 150–2

c) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 15ᵛ–16ʳ: on the Prophet Hūd
    Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ 169, 171, 173

d) Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 17ʳ–19ʳ: on the Prophet Ṣāliḥ
    Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ 179–80, 182–3, 188–90

21) al-Bayḍāwī, Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad (d. ca. 716/1316)

a) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 62: on the exegesis of Q 46:35
    Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl v, 117

b) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 103: on the exegesis of Q 5:55
    Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl ii, 132

c) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 110: on the exegesis of Q 2:31
    Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl i, 69

d) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 174: on the exegesis of Q 43:81
    Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl v, 97

22) al-Nīsābūrī, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Qummī (d. 729/1328–9)

Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 12ᵛ–13ʳ: on the exegesis of Q 2:102
Gharāʾib al-Qurʾān wa-raghāʾib al-furqān i, 350

23) Ibn al-Dawādārī, Abū Bakr b. ʿAbdallāh b. Aybak (d. after 736/1335)

Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 41ᵛ: on Moses' life
Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar ii, 228

24) al-Indarbatī, Farīd al-Dīn ʿĀlim b. al-ʿAlāʾ al-Hindī (d. 786/1381)

Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 111: on a prayer leader's mistake
al-Fatāwā al-Tatarkhāniyya ii, 427

25) al-Taftāzānī, Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. ʿUmar (d. 793/1390)

a) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 126–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 40: on faith and free will
    Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid 117 (several passages)

b) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 127–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 40–1: on the persistence of faith
    Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid 112–3

c) Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71: on the increase and decrease
    of faith
    Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid v, 211

d)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 260: on the definition of knowledge
     Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid 19

e)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 260–1: on the definition of knowledge
     Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid 15 (two passages)

f)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 277: on the causes of knowledge
     Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid 23

g)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 283: on divine guidance
     Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid iv, 309

26) al-Damīrī, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā (d. 808/1405)
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 108; (ed. ʿAzzām) 43: on the permissibility of chess
Kitāb Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān ii, 144

27) al-Jurjānī, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 816/1413)
a)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 117–8: on the conditions of a prophetic miracle
     Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 343

b)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 212; (ed. ʿAzzām) 71: on the increase and decrease
     of faith
     Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 542–3

c)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 257–8: on the relationship between reason and rev-
     elation
     Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* i, 163

d)   Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 259: on the unlimitedness of God's power
     Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, in al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* iii, 86–7

**28) Ibn al-Shiḥna, Zayn al-Dīn Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad b. Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥam-
mad (d. 815/412)**
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 205–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 68–71: on Tīmūr's conquest of Aleppo
Rawḍat al-manāẓir, fols. 118ʳ–118ᵛ (possibly quoted indirectly via Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib
al-maqdūr*)

29) al-Maḥallī, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 864/1459)
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 239–40: on the vision of God
al-Badr al-lāmiʿ fī ḥall Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ, printed in the upper margin of al-ʿAṭṭār, *Ḥāshiyat
al-ʿAṭṭār* ii, 466–7

30) al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 911/1505)
Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 76–7: on questions sent by the Byzantine emperor to
Muʿāwiya
al-Durr al-manthūr fī l-tafsīr bil-maʾthūr xi, 258–9

31)   Bāyqarā, Ḥusayn (d. 912/1506)

al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 258; (ed. ʿAzzām) 134: two verses of a Persian poem

Dīwān 56

32)   Anonymous

Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 19ᵛ–20ʳ, 21ᵛ–22ʳ: story of King Shaddād and his City of Gold

Alf Layla wa-layla ii, 506–7 (nights 277–9)

Participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis*

The following three tables provide information on all the participants in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* known by name. The first table includes information on twenty people for whom we have evidence that they participated in the *majālis* at least three times; on this basis, we refer to them as regular participants. The second table provides data on twenty-three people who, according to our sources, definitely participated in the *majālis* at least once or twice. The third table lists seventeen individuals who are referred to in the *majālis* accounts and who were alive during al-Ghawrī's reign, but for whom we have no conclusive evidence that they attended the sultan's salons.

The first column of each table gives the name of the respective person beginning with the part of their name that appears most often in the *majālis* accounts. This part of the name is also used for the alphabetical ordering of each table. The second column provides the year of death, while the third identifies the position the person in question held when he participated in the sultan's *majālis*. The fourth column enumerates all the occurrences of that person in the *majālis* sources, with the word *"passim"* replacing specific references when a person occurs more than thirty times in a given source. Columns five and six identify passages in three chronicles and three biographical dictionaries that provide information on the respective person, either with specific page numbers or by indicating under which name the individual can be found in the index. The following six works are referenced: Muḥammad Ibn Iyās' *Badā'i' al-zuhūr* (abbreviated as *Badā'i'*), Aḥmad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's *Ḥawādith al-zamān* (abbreviated as *Ḥawādith*), Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn's *Mufākahat al-khillān* (abbreviated as *Mufākahat*), Muḥammad al-Ghazzī's *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira* (abbreviated as *al-Kawākib*), Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanbalī's *Durr al-ḥabab* (abbreviated as *Durr*), and *Mut'at al-adhhān* (abbreviated as *Mut'at*) by Ibn Ṭūlūn, Yūsuf Ibn al-Mibrad, and Aḥmad Ibn Munlā. The final column includes additional remarks.

TABLE 1 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least three times

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qaṣrawī, Muḥyī l-Dīn b. ʿAlī b. Muṣliḥ	After 927/1520	*Nāẓir al-jaysh*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 128, 169, 205–6, 244; (ed. ʿAzzām) 48–9, 64, 90–1, 123	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿAbd al-Qādir b. ʿAlī b. Muṣliḥ b. al-Naqīb, Muḥyī l-Dīn"	–	On him, see Martel-Thoumian, *Civils* 80, 287, 458.
ʿAbd al-Razzāq	922/1516	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 35, 43, 48, 97–8, 141, 147, 152, 162, 177, 188, 209, 216, 232, 256, 261; (ed. ʿAzzām) 19, 22, 27, 53, 56, 76, 95–6, 131, 138	*Badāʾiʿ* v, 15	–	–
al-Akhmīmī, ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī	Unknown	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 71, 159, 164, 206, 215, 247, 251; (ed. ʿAzzām) 23, 61, 91, 116, 118	*Ḥawādith* ii, 15	–	–
al-Ghawrī, al-Malik al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Abū l-Naṣr Qāniṣawh min Baybardī	922/1516	Sultan and host of *majālis*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis*, *passim*; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab*, *passim*; Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd*, *passim*	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Qā-niṣawh min Baybardī, al-Ghawrī"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī"	*al-Kawākib* i, 294–7; *Durr* ii.1, 45–55; *Mutʿat* i, 319–25, 377–9	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.1 above.

TABLE 1 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least three times (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Ḥusayn al-Sharīf	Unknown	Envoy of an Indian ruler	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 30; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 18, 31; (ed. ʿAzzām) 13	—	—	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.3 above.
Ibn Abī Sharīf, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Maqdisī	921/1516	*Shaykh* of the Sufis of al-Ghawrī's funeral complex	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7, 31, 89, 109, 160, 229, 264; (ed. ʿAzzām) 6, 32, 109–10, 141–2; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 122–5, 272, 324; (ed. ʿAzzām) 35–8, 77	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Maqdisī, Burhān al-Dīn"; *Ḥawādith* iii, 107; *Mufākahat* i, 211–2, 244, 294; ii, 61	*al-Kawākib* i, 102–5; *Durr* i, 21–7; *Mutʿat* i, 272	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.2 above.
Ibn Ajā, Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī	925/1519	*Kātib al-sirr*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 127, 168–9, 205, 243–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 47, 64, 90, 123	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Ibn Ajā al-Ḥalabī"; *Ḥawādith* i, 388; iii, 11; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Maḥmūd Ibn Ajā"	*al-Kawākib* i, 303–5; *Durr*, Index s.v. "Maḥmūd Ibn Ajā al-Qūnawī"; *Mutʿat* ii, 798–800	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.2 above.
Ibn Qijiq, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī	920/1514	Master of musicians	Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 53ʳ, 75ᵛ–76ᵛ	*Badāʾiʿ* iv, 124–5, 321, 326, 401	—	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.4 above.

TABLE 1   People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least three times (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Ibn al-Shiḥna, Sarī l-Dīn ʿAbd al-Barr b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad	921/1515	Ḥanafī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 24, 63, 154, 166–9, 229, 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 57–8, 63–4, 110, 141; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab passim*	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿAbd al-Barr b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna"; *Ḥawādith* ii, 17, 27, 62, 74, 116, 138; *Mufākahat* i, 301, 324, 386	*al-Kawākib* i, 220–2; *Durr* i.2, 744–7	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.2 above.
Kamāl al-Dīn al-Barqūqī	Unknown	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 21, 44, 181, 192, 213, 220, 224, 247; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18, 72, 79, 100, 106	–	–	–
Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭawīl, Muḥammad al-Qādirī	936/1529–30	Shāfiʿī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 229, 265; (ed. ʿAzzām) 110, 142; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 19, 125–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 13, 38–41	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Bahādur al-Qādirī, Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭawīl"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭawīl"; *Mufākahat* i, 325; ii, 14	*al-Kawākib* ii, 45–6; *Durr* iii, 80–1	–
al-Khalīlī, Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tamīmī	952/1545	Shāfiʿī deputy judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 260–1, 263, 265; (ed. ʿAzzām) 136, 138, 140, 142	–	*al-Kawākib* ii, 245; *Mutʿat* ii, 800–2	–

TABLE 1 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least three times (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī	Unknown	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 100, 149, 169, 191, 203, 235, 250, 263; (ed. ʿAzzām) 28, 64, 77, 87, 114, 126, 141	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī"	–	–
Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Makkī	Unknown	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16, 24, 138, 143, 154, 158, 174, 179, 186, 199, 211, 229, 243, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16, 55, 57, 60, 68, 71, 75, 85, 96, 109, 123, 135	–	–	–
Nūr al-Dīn al-Khawāṣṣ al-Muʾadhdhin	Unknown	Muezzin of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 171, 224, 259; (ed. ʿAzzām) 66, 106, 136	*Badāʾiʿ* v, 43, 77	–	–
Qurqud, Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad al-ʿUthmānī	918/1513	Ottoman prince	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 6, 39–41, 144, 211–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5, 16–7, 44–5, 71	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Qurqud b. Abī Yazīd b. Muḥammad b. Murād Bik Ibn ʿUthmān"	–	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.3 above.

TABLE 1 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least three times (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
al-Samadīsī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Naqīb al-Ḥanafī	932/1525–6	*Imām* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6, 10, 137, 156, 166, 171, 183, 195, 201, 218–9, 225, 240–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5, 9, 59, 63, 66, 81, 86, 107, 118–20	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥammad b. al-Naqīb al-Ḥanafī, al-Samadīsī"; *Ḥawādith* ii, 252, 255, 268	*al-Kawākib* i, 98	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.2 above.
al-Sharīf, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī	Unknown	Author of *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*, Sufi in the sultan's funeral complex	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis*, *passim*	–	–	On him see esp. section 3.1.1.3 above.
al-Sharīf, Nūr Allāh	Unknown	Unknown	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 230, 292–3, 300; (ed. ʿAzzām) 74, 86	–	–	–
Umm Abū l-Ḥasan, Aḥmad	Unknwon	Jester	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 16, 53, 164, 187, 217, 220–2, 230–3, 238–40, 248–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16, 75, 97, 100–1, 103, 110–3, 116, 118	–	–	On him see esp. section 4.1.2.4 above.

TABLE 2   People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least once or twice

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
ʿAbbās	Unknown	Instructor of young *mamlūks*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 164–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61–2	–	–	On him see esp. section 3.1.2.3 above.
Abū l-Khayr al-Muʾadhdhin	Unknown	Muezzin of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 141	–	–	–
ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ḥasan Ibn al-Imām	After 923/1517	*Nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 129; (ed. ʿAzzām) 49	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿAlī b. Ḥasan Ibn al-Imām, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Ibn al-Imām, nāẓir al-khāṣṣ bi-Miṣr"	*Mutʿat* i, 322	On him see Martel-Thoumian, *Civils* 52, 81, 159, 175, 178, 354, 361.
Azdamur min ʿAlī Bāy al-Ashrafī	913/1507	*Amīr dawādār*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 125–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 45	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Azda-mur min ʿAlī Bāy al-Ashrafī"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Azdamur al-Dawādār al-kabīr fī Miṣr"	–	–

TABLE 2 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least once or twice (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
al-Ghazzī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Maghribī	918/1512	Friday preacher in the sultan's funeral complex	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 238, 256–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 116, 132	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥammad al-Ghazzī b. al-Maghribī Shams al-Dīn"	*al-Kawākib* i, 83	–
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dehdār	Unknown	Itinerant scholar	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 24	–	–	On him see section 4.1.2.3 above.
al-Ḥalabī, Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī	910/1505	Unknown	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 6, 41; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5, 19	–	–	–
Ibn Farfūr, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Dimashqī	911/1505	Shāfiʿī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 12, 82, 128, 202; (ed. ʿAzzām) 12, 48, 87	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Aḥmad Ibn Farfūr al-Dimashqī, Shihāb al-Dīn"; *Ḥawādith* iii, 97; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Farfūr"	*al-Kawākib* i, 143–7	–
Ibn ʿIfrīt	Unknown	Instructor of young *mamlūks*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 166; (ed. ʿAzzām) 63	–	–	–

TABLE 2   People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least once or twice (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Ibn Naḥḥās	Unknown	Poet	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 111; (ed. ʿAzzām) 32	–	–	–
Ibrāhīm al-Muwāhibī, Burhān al-Dīn	922/1516	Sufi *shaykh*	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 45; (ed. ʿAzzām) 149	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Ibrāhīm al-Muwāhibī, Burhān al-Dīn al-Shādhilī"	–	–
Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Khashshāb, Abū l-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr al-Ḥalabī	921/1515	Shāfiʿī deputy judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 24	*Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Jamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥalabī Ibn al-Khashshāb"	*al-Kawākib* i, 319; *Durr*, Index s.v. "Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr al-Ḥalabī"	–
al-Maḥallī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad	Unknown	Unknown	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 193–4, 214; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Aḥmad al-Maḥallī, Shihāb al-Dīn"		On him see esp. section 5.1.2 above.
Qānī Bāy Qarā al-Rammāḥ min Walī l-Dīn	922/1516	*Amīr akhūr*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 125; (ed. ʿAzzām) 44–5	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Qānī Bāy Qarā al-Rammāḥ min Walī l-Dīn"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Qānī Bāy al-Rammāḥ"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Qānī Bak al-Rammāḥ"	–	–

TABLE 2 People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least once or twice (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Qurqmās min Walī l-Dīn al-Bahādurī	916/1510	*Atābak*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 123–4, 244; (ed. ʿAzzām) 42–3, 123	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Qurqmās min Walī l-Dīn"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Qurqmās"; *Mufākahat* i, 239, 356	*Mutʿat*, Index "Qurqmās al-Bahādurī"	–
Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṣughayr	After 924/1518	*Kātib al-dawla*	Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fols. 5ᵛ–6ʳ	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṣaghīr"; *Ḥawādith* ii, 279;	–	On him see Martel-Thoumian, *Civils* 38, 89, 148, 178.
al-Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-Jīʿān	After 931/1524	*Nāʾib kātib al-sirr*	Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* i, fol. 6ᵛ	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "al-Shihābī Aḥmad Ibn al-Jīʿān"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Aḥmad Ibn al-Jīʿān, al-Shihāb al-Dīn"	*al-Kawākib* i, 158	On him see Martel-Thoumian, *Civils* 46, 296, 299–301, 310, 314, 316, 319.
Sibāy min Bukht Jā	922/1516	Governor of Damascus	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 123–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 41–3	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Sibāy min Bukht Jā"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Sibāy"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Sibāy min Bukhtjak nāʾib Ḥamāh"	*Durr*, Index s.v. "Sibāy nāʾib al-Shām"; *Mutʿat*, Index s.v. "Sibāy b. Bukhtjā"	–

TABLE 2   People participating in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* at least once or twice (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Sīdī Ismāʿīl	Unknown	Unknown	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 181; (ed. ʿAzzām) 72	–	–	–
Sūdūn al-ʿAjamī min Jānī Bak	922/1516	*Amīr majlis*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 125; (ed. ʿAzzām) 44	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Sūdūn al-ʿAjamī min Jānī Bak"; *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Sūdūn al-ʿAjamī"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "Sūdūn al-ʿAjamī"	–	–
Tanum	Unknown	Unknown	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 60	–	–	–
Ṭuqṭbāy al-Alāʾī	923/1517	*Nāʾib al-qalʿa*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 126; (ed. ʿAzzām) 46	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Ṭuqṭbāy al-Alāʾī", *Ḥawādith*, Index s.v. "Ṭuqṭbāy"	–	–
Yūsuf b. al-Ṭaḥḥān al-Jamālī	Unknown	Unknown	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 51	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Yūsuf b. al-Ṭaḥḥān al-Jamālī"	–	–

TABLE 3   People mentioned in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* who were alive during the sultan's reign but for whom participation in the *majālis* could not be ascertained

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Abū l-Faḍl al-Farr	–	Reciter of the Quran	Anonymous, *al-ʿUqūd* ii, fols. 46ᵛ–47ʳ	*Badāʾiʿ* v, 43	–	–
ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Ibn ʿUthmān, ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Abī Yazīd	919/1513	Ottoman prince	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (ed. ʿAzzām) 95–6	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Abī Yazīd Ibn ʿUthmān"	–	–
Badr al-Dīn al-Dīrī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān	914/1508	*Shaykh* of al-Muʾayyad's *madrasa*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230; (ed. ʿAzzām) 110	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dīrī, Badr al-Dīn"	–	–
Burhān al-Dīn al-Damīrī, Ibrāhīm	913/1508	Mālikī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 230, 264–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 110, 142	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Ibrāhīm al-Damīrī, Burhān al-Dīn"	*al-Kawākib* i, 110	–
Burhān al-Dīn al-Karakī, Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad	922/1516	Former Ḥanafī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 124; (ed. ʿAzzām) 142	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Karakī"; *Mufākahat* ii, 61	*al-Kawākib* i, 112–3	–
Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz	Unknown	Unknown	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 207–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 93	–	–	–

TABLE 3 People mentioned in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad	911/1505	Independent scholar	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 7, 160–1, 187; (ed. ʿAzzām) 6, 75; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 232, 234, 273; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75, 77	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad […] al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn"; *Mufākahat*, Index s.v. "ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Sābiq al-Suyūṭī"	*al-Kawākib* i, 227–32; *Durr*, Index s.v. "al-Suyūṭī"	–
Muḥammad b. ʿAbbād Allāh, Shams al-Dīn	Unknown	Civil official of unknown rank	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 269; (ed. ʿAzzām) 94	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Muḥammad al-ʿAbbādī, Shams al-Dīn"	–	On him see section 3.1.3 above.
al-Nushaylī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad	910/1505	Shāfiʿī deputy judge and *nadīm* of the sultan	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 19; (ed. ʿAzzām) 18	–	*al-Kawākib* i, 151	–
Ṣantabāy	Unknown	Sufi *shaykh*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79	–	–	On him see esp. section 5.1.2 above.

TABLE 3 People mentioned in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's majālis (cont.)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
Sarı Gürz, Hamza	927/1521	Visiting scholar	Anonymous, al-Kawkab (ed. ʿAzzām) 91–5	–	–	For an overview of the information included in Ottoman sources about him, see Beldiceanu-Steinherr, Ouvrage 397.
Shāhīn al-Muḥammadī	954/1547–8	Sufi shaykh	al-Sharīf, Nafāʾis (MS) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79	–	al-Kawākib i, 149	On him see esp. section 5.1.2 above.
Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ramlī, Aḥmad b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Mallāḥ	Unknown	Sufi at the sultan's funeral complex	al-Sharīf, Nafāʾis (MS) 206; (ed. ʿAzzām) 91	Badāʾiʿ, Index s.v. "Aḥmad al-Ramlī Shihāb al-Dīn"; Mufākahat, Index s.v. "Aḥmad al-Ramlī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-maʿrūf bi-Ibn al-Mallāḥ"	al-Kawākib iii, 101	–

TABLE 3   People mentioned in the accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis* (*cont.*)

Name	Year of death	Position	Occurrences in main sources	Information in chronicles	Information in biographical dictionaries	Notes
al-Shishīnī, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanbalī	919/1513	Ḥanbalī chief judge	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 265; (ed. ʿAzzām) 142	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Shishīnī"; *Mufākahat* i, 325	–	–
Sulāymān Ibn ʿUthmān, Ibn Aḥmad b. Abī Yazīd	919/1513	Ottoman prince	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (ed. ʿAzzām) 95–6	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "Sulāymān b. Aḥmad Ibn ʿUthmān"	–	–
Tamirtāsh al-Muḥammadī	938/1532	Sufi *shaykh*	al-Sharīf, *Nafāʾis* (MS) 194; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79	–	*al-Kawākib* i, 195–6	On him see esp. section 5.1.2 above.
ʿUthmān al-Daymī, Fakhr al-Dīn	909/1504	*Ḥadīth* scholar	Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS) 232; (ed. ʿAzzām) 75	*Badāʾiʿ*, Index s.v. "ʿUthmān al-Daymī, Fakhr al-Dīn"	*Durr* i, 995; *Mutʿat*, Index s.v. "ʿUthmān al-Daymī"	–

Parallel Passages in the Accounts of al-Ghawrī's *majālis*

The following table includes all known passages in which content from *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya* that describes events or discussions during Sultan al-Ghawrī's *majālis* parallels content in *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and/or *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya*. The table follows the order of the appearance of this material in *Nafāʾis majālis al-sulṭāniyya*. It provides the references for each relevant passage, identifies the field of scholarship to which it belongs, gives a brief summary of the topic, discusses the degree of overlap between the parallel versions, and adds further remarks as necessary.

Note that textual parallels between only *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-ʿUqūd al-jawhariyya* are not included in the following table, as such parallels are of little relevance for the assessment of the source value of the texts, given that we know the two works are not independent from each other. For further information, see section 3.1.5 above.

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
1	(MS) 6–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 5–6	(MS) 272–3		*ʿaqīda*	Why one should pray for the Prophet	Similar basic question and answer, limited literal overlap mainly in religious formulas, different authoritative texts quoted	
2	(MS) 10; (ed. ʿAzzām) 9	(MS) 20		*fiqh*	What is forbidden to do and not to do	Same question and answer, literal overlap in technical terminology	
3	(MS) 12–3; (ed. ʿAzzām) 11–2	(MS) 176; (ed. ʿAzzām) 52		*fiqh*	How one man can be a woman's son, brother, husband, and slave	Same basic question and answer (but with more circumstantial details in *Nafāʾis*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
4	(MS) 13–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 12–3	(MS) 155–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 47–8	i, fols. 95ʳ–95ᵛ	*fiqh*	Why al-Shāfiʿī is called al-Shāfiʿī	Same question, with similar, but clearly not identical answer with *al-Kawkab* and *al-ʿUqūd* agreeing in many details with each other, but not with *Nafāʾis*, limited literal overlap between *Nafāʾis* on the one hand and *al-Kawkab* and *al-ʿUqūd* on the other, close overlap between al-*Kawkab* and *al-ʿUqūd*	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion, with *al-Kawkab* and *al-ʿUqūd* agreeing with each other, but not with *Nafāʾis*

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
5	(MS) 14; (ed. ʿAzzām) 14	(MS) 271		*tafsīr*	Exegesis of *amthāl* in Q 6:160	Similar basic question, similar basic answer (but more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
6	(MS) 17; (ed. ʿAzzām) 16–7	(MS) 302		*fiqh*	Whether a man who alone sees the new moon may break his fast	Same basic question, similar, but clearly not identical answer, very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
7	(MS) 17–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 17	(MS) 302		*lugha*	On the meaning of the term *ʿīd*	Same basic question and answer (but both more detailed in *Nafāʾis*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
8	(MS) 18	(MS) 94		*tafsīr*	Usage of grammatical numera in Q 2:7	Same basic question, similar answer (but clearly not identical), *tafsīr* authority only quoted in *al-Kawkab*, no literal overlap apart from quoted Quranic material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
9	(MS) 21–2	(MS) 122		*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*	Why Joseph received only Egypt, whereas Solomon ruled the entire world	Same basic question (but much more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), same answer, partial literal overlap, especially in quoted Quranic material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion

(*cont.*)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
10	(MS) 26–7	(MS) 164–5		*ḥadīth*	Harmonization of *ḥadīths* on not loving this world	Same basic question and answer (but both more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), no literal overlap apart from quoted *ḥadīth* material	
11	(MS) 36	(MS) 236		*fiqh*	How two men can be each other's maternal uncle	Same question and similar, but clearly not identical answer, very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
12	(MS) 37	(MS) 10; (ed. ʿAzzām) 8		*ḥadīth*	On beginning everything important with the *basmala*	Same basic question and answer, limited literal overlap in religious formulas and technical terminology	
13	(MS) 37–8	(MS) 144–5		*ḥadīth*	On beginning everything important with the *basmala* or with the *taḥmīd*	Same basic question and answer, considerable literal overlap because of same quoted *ḥadīth* material, content divided into two separate questions in *Nafāʾis*	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in Nafāʾis	Passage in al-Kawkab	Passage in al-ʿUqūd	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
14	(MS) 38	(MS) 145		fiqh	How one can blaspheme God by uttering the basmala	Same basic question and similar answer, very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
15	(MS) 43	(MS) 73		fiqh	Whether interest-free loans or voluntary alms are better	Same question, similar but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in Nafāʾis), limited literal overlap, mainly in technical terminology	
16	(MS) 50–1	(MS) 167–8		ḥadīth	Harmonization of ḥadīths on the merit of poverty	Similar, but clearly not identical question and answer (more detailed in Nafāʾis), limited literal overlap, especially in technical terminology and quoted ḥadīth material	
17	(MS) 51	(MS) 167		ḥadīth	Whether it is better to be faqīr or miskīn	Same basic question, similar but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in al-Kawkab), limited literal overlap in technical terminology and quoted ḥadīth material	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
18	(MS) 54	(MS) 31		*tafsīr*	Whether Jesus is still alive according to Q 5:116–7	Loosely similar question and answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), no significant literal overlap apart from quoted Quranic material	
19	(MS) 57	(MS) 170		*tafsīr*	Abrogation as indicated by Q 2:106	Same question and similar answer (more detailed in *Nafāʾis*), large degree of literal overlap esp. in question, partially because of same quoted Quranic material	
20	(MS) 62–3	(MS) 175		*tafsīr*	Whether Mary's rank is higher than that of Khadija according to Q 3:42	Similar question, different but not contradictory answer (more detailed in *Nafāʾis*), no significant literal overlap apart from quoted Quranic material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
21	(MS) 67	(MS) 8		*fiqh*	How the recitation of the Quran can invalidate one's prayer	Same question, similar but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *Nafāʾis*), considerable literal overlap in the question, hardly any literal overlap in the answer apart from technical terminology	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion

(*cont.*)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
22	(MS) 72	(MS) 67–8		*fiqh*	How five men can commit adultery and receive different punishments	Same question, similar but in part clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), almost completely literal overlap in question consisting mainly of technical terminology, limited literal overlap in answer, mainly in technical terminology	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
23	(MS) 74	(MS) 90		*fiqh*	Conditions of an oath	Same question, similar answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), considerable literal overlap in question consisting mainly of technical terminology, limited literal overlap in answer, mainly in technical terminology	
24	(MS) 74–5	(MS) 90; (ed. ʿAzzām) 30		*fiqh*	Why some people are allowed to break their fast while others in the same place are not	Similar question, different answer and implied legal ruling, limited literal overlap in technical terminology	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
25	(MS) 75	(MS) 178–9		*fiqh*	On the eschatological consequences of homicide	Same question, similar answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), considerable literal overlap in technical terminology and quoted sources	
26	(MS) 77	(MS) 171–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 50		*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*	On the cutting of hands in the story about the Prophet Joseph	Same question and answer, considerable literal overlap, mainly in same quoted material on the *qiṣṣa* of Joseph	
27	(MS) 77	(MS) 172		*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*	On Zulaykhāʾs behavior toward Joseph	Same basic question, similar basic answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap, mainly in technical terminology	
28	(MS) 77–8	(MS) 172–3		*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*	Judgment on Zulaykhāʾs love for Joseph	Same basic question, similar basic answer (more detailed in *Nafāʾis*), limited literal overlap, mainly in quoted Quranic material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
29	(MS) 78	(MS) 173		*tafsīr*	On Q 12:31	Same basic question and answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), considerable overlap, mainly in quoted material	

(*cont.*)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
30	(MS) 78	(MS) 173–4		*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*	Judgment on Zulaykhā's love for Joseph	Same question and answer, limited literal overlap, mainly in technical terminology	
31	(MS) 88–9	(MS) 168–9		*ḥadīth*	Various traditions about what was created first	Same basic question, similar, but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap, mainly in technical terminology and quoted *ḥadīth* material	
32	(MS) 90–1	(MS) 222		*fiqh*	Quantity of water needed for ritual ablution	Same basic question and similar, but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
33	(MS) 92–3	(MS) 29–30		*ḥadīth*	Whether illegitimate children will not enter paradise	Same basic question, entirely different answer, very limited literal overlap in quoted *ḥadīth* material	
34	(MS) 96	(MS) 79–80		*fiqh*	Whether human beings and *jinns* may marry in this world	Same basic question, entirely different answer (much more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in Nafāʾis	Passage in al-Kawkab	Passage in al-ʿUqūd	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
35	(MS) 98–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 27 (incomplete)	(MS) 257–8		kalām	The role of reason and revelation in knowing God	Similar, but clearly not identical question and answer, limited literal overlap because of same quoted Quranic material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
36	(MS) 103–4	(MS) 306–7		ṭibb	Difference between ejaculation and urination	Same basic question and answer, limited literal overlap, mainly in technical terminology	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
37	(MS) 105	(MS) 220–1		fiqh	Alternative formulas of the shahāda	Similar question, entirely different answer (much more detailed in al-Kawkab), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
38	(MS) 117	(MS) 35		fiqh	Which vessel cannot be cleaned by water	Same basic question and answer (but more detailed in Nafāʾis), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
39	(MS) 144; (ed. ʿAzzām) 55–6	(MS) 170		ʿaqīda	On messengers sent to angels	Similar question, similar, but clearly not identical answer, very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
40	(MS) 144–5	(MS) 170		*tafsīr*	Status of angels in Q 35:1	Similar question, similar, but clearly not identical answer, very limited literal overlap in technical terminology and quoted Quranic material	
41	(MS) 150–1	(MS) 223–4		*fiqh*	Story about Abū Yūsuf, Mālik b. Anas, and Hārūn al-Rashīd	Same story, very large degree of literal overlap (but not identical, *al-Kawkab* slightly more detailed), both works obviously quoting the same source	
42	(MS) 154; (ed. ʿAzzām) 57–8	(MS) 108; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34		*fiqh*	On the permissibility of playing chess	Similar question, different answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
43	(MS) 156–7	(MS) 115–6		*ḥadīth*	Status of Muḥammad's grandsons in paradise	Similar question and answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology and quoted *ḥadīth* material	Versions include contradictory information as to who said what in the discussion
44	(MS) 157; (ed. ʿAzzām) 59–60		ii, 28ʳ	*tārīkh*	On Maḥmūd of Ghazna's habits while playing chess	Similar beginning of story, different end	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
45	(MS) 160–1	(MS) 233–5; (ed. ʿAzzām) 34		*tafsīr*	Exegesis of Q 33:72	Same basic question and answer (but much more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), considerable literal overlap because of quotation of the same Quranic and exegetical material	
46	(MS) 164–5	(MS) 25–6		*tafsīr*	Exegesis of Q 1:7	Same basic question and answer (more detailed in al-*Kawkab*), no literal overlap apart from quoted Quranic material and technical terminology	
47	(MS) 165; (ed. ʿAzzām) 61	(MS) 47		*fiqh*	Prayer of the naked	Same basic question and answer (more detailed in al-*Kawkab*), very limited textual overlap in technical terminology	
48	(MS) 173; (ed. ʿAzzām) 67–8		ii, fol. 80r	literature	Man demanding a lot of money from the suitor of his daughter	Similar, but clearly not identical story, very limited literal overlap	
49	(MS) 178–9	(MS) 10–1; (ed. ʿAzzām) 9		*fiqh*	Necessity of reciting Sura *al-Fātiḥa* in prayer	Similar question and answer, very limited literal overlap apart from quoted Quranic verse	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in Nafāʾis	Passage in al-Kawkab	Passage in al-ʿUqūd	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
50	(MS) 184–5	(MS) 116		ḥadīth	Harmonization of prophetic traditions on Muḥammad's status	Same basic question, clearly not identical answer (much more detailed in al-Kawkab), no textual overlap apart from quoted ḥadīth material	
51	(MS) 193–4; (ed. ʿAzzām) 79–80		ii, fol. 75ᵛ	tārīkh	Dream about al-Ghawrī's future	Same basic story (much more detailed in Nafāʾis), very limited literal overlap	
52	(MS) 195–6; (ed. ʿAzzām) 81–2		ii, fol. 28ᵛ	tārīkh	Commission of the Shāhnāme	Same basic story (much more detailed in Nafāʾis), very limited literal overlap	
53	(MS) 196–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 82–3		ii, fols. 28ʳ–28ᵛ	tārīkh	Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna and his servant Ayās	Same basic story (but differing details), very limited literal overlap	
54	(MS) 197–9; (ed. ʿAzzām) 83–4		ii, fols. 26ʳ–27ʳ	tārīkh	Ayās telling Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna about the true nature of things	Same basic story (more detailed in al-ʿUqūd), limited literal overlap	
55	(MS) 200; (ed. ʿAzzām) 85		i, fols. 34ᵛ–35ʳ	tārīkh	Origin of the Circassians	Similar, but clearly not identical story, very limited literal overlap	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in *Nafāʾis*	Passage in *al-Kawkab*	Passage in *al-ʿUqūd*	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
56	(MS) 213–4		i, fols. 82ᵛ–83ʳ	*tārīkh*	Story about al-Walīd b. Yazīd and his drinking habits	Similar story, very limited literal overlap apart from quotation of same verses	
57	(MS) 214		i, fol. 83ʳ	*tārīkh*	Judgment about Walīd b. Yazīd and his drinking habits	Same statement, but no literal overlap	
58	(MS) 216–7; (ed. ʿAzzām) 97		ii, fol. 25ᵛ	*tārīkh*	Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim	Same statement, very limited literal overlap	
59	(MS) 234	(MS) 112		*fiqh*	Conditions of an oath	Same question and similar answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
60	(MS) 234	(MS) 112–3		*fiqh*	Conditions of an oath	Same question, similar, but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), very limited overlap in technical terminology	
61	(MS) 235	(MS) 192		*fiqh*	Manumission of a slave	Similar question and similar, but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in *al-Kawkab*), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	

(cont.)

Number	Passage in Nafāʾis	Passage in al-Kawkab	Passage in al-ʿUqūd	Field of scholarship	Topic	Degree of overlap	Further remarks
62	(MS) 235	(MS) 229		fiqh	Manumission of a slave	Same basic question, similar, but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in Nafāʾis), limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
63	(MS) 238	(MS) 113		fiqh	Conditions of an oath	Same question, similar but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in al-Kawkab), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
64	(MS) 238	(MS) 12		ʿaqīda	Punishment in the hereafter	Similar question, similar but clearly not identical answer (more detailed in al-Kawkab, but more circumstantial information in Nafāʾis), very limited literal overlap in technical terminology	
65	(MS) 251–2; (ed. ʿAzzām) 128		ii, fols. 22ʳ–22ᵛ	tārīkh	al-Fārābī in Sayf al-Dawla's majlis	Same basic story (more detailed in al-ʿUqūd), very limited literal overlap	
66	(MS) 257–8; (ed. ʿAzzām) 133–4		i, fols. 31ʳ–31ᵛ	tārīkh	Mamluk embassy to the Ottomans	Same basic story, very limited literal overlap	
67	(MS) 260; (ed. ʿAzzām) 137		ii, fol. 51ᵛ	literature	al-Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī's generosity	Same basic story (more detailed in al-ʿUqūd), very limited literal overlap	

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